

REASON & RELIGION

By

GANGA PRASAD UPADHYAYA

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ARYA SAMAJ, CHOWK, ALLAHABAD

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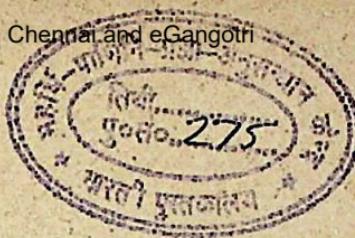
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TO
THE MEMORY
OF
SWAMI DAYANAND
THE REVERED FOUNDER
OF THE
ARYA SAMAJ

PREFACE

These days religion is looked upon as a bugbear. Yet mankind has not been able to give up religiosity. To banish religion is one thing; to try to free it from the bondage of pretenders quite another. We entirely agree with the view of the great modern scientist Max Planck "*that the religious element in his nature must be recognised and cultivated if all the powers of the human soul are to act together in perfect balance and harmony.*" True religiosity is the only bed-rock on which the great fabric of human progress can be built in safety. It is to expound this view that the books of the Religious Renaissance Series are being written.

GANGA PRASAD UPADHYAYA

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REASON AND RELIGION

CHAPTER I

LAWS OF NATURE

Whatever the diversity in the opinions of scientists, they all agree on one point, i.e., the eternity of natural laws. In this changeful universe where nothing remains the same for any length of time and space, there is one thing that is above spatial or temporal influences and that is laws. It is a truth so axiomatic that none has tried to prove it, nor anybody has ever denied it. If it were not so, there would have been no science at all; for all scientific researches are based upon the supposition that the laws, which govern nature were the same, are the same and will remain the same. Take for instance the law of composition of water expressed by the chemical formula H₂O. This holds good in case of all waters, whether examined to-day or ten thousand years ago. The water taken from the Ganges or the

Thames to-day or from the Jordan two thousand years ago submits to the same law. A triangle in the time of Euclid was not a jot different from its cousins handled by a school boy to-day. The nature of π was the same in the time of Aryabhatta, Pythagorus, Plato or Newton, and it is as certain as anything that it will ever remain the same.

No doubt, all scientists have not thought like-wise in all times, but it is our *knowledge* about laws that changes and not the *laws* themselves. When we say that science has much advanced these days, we mean that our knowledge about the laws of nature is more accurate now than it was before. And how can we say that our knowledge about the laws is more accurate, unless we admit that the laws themselves are the same? When we say that in making experiments, a certain scientist made such and such mistake, do we not mean that the law which he wanted to discover in his own time was the same as it is to-day in our time? For changeful things we cannot say so. A man measured a certain rod as 8 ft. 3 inches. To-day it is 8 ft. and 4 inches. The rod is changeful. Therefore we cannot say that the measurer was inaccurate. It is quite possible that the rod has expanded. Prayaga as described in the Ramayana

was not what it is to-day ; but we cannot attribute this difference to the inaccurate observation of the author. Why ? Because Prayaga is susceptible to variations and must have undergone vast changes in these long years. But can we say the same thing about laws ? Can we say that the people in the Biblical days were right in believing the earth to be flat or stationary as in their time it was so ? Do we not assume that the laws which govern a body like our earth are such that it is impossible for us to believe that the earth could ever be flat or immovable ? And it is not mere *assumption*. It is something much stronger. It forces conviction upon us. It leaves us no choice.

Thus we see that behind all thinking there is a ruling idea that the laws of the universe are eternal, though the universe itself may not be so. Apparently it may sound paradoxical, as how can changeful universe have unchanging laws ? But the mistake lies in misunderstanding the relation between laws and universe. When we use the term "laws of the universe" or "laws of nature", the preposition 'of' does not mean the same thing as in the expression "colour of gold". In this latter phrase 'of' denotes something belonging to

the precious metal. But in the term 'laws of nature' we mean not laws made by nature or originated by nature or the laws over which nature has a despotic sway. It means the laws that govern nature, i.e., nature is subject to these laws and not *vice versa*. There is a good deal of misconception about these terms and from time immemorial, it has done a great loss to humanity. Many funny phrases have found a currency in the human language which it is difficult to interpret correctly except by supposing that they originated in vague and sometimes wrong thinking. 'Freaks of nature' is one of such phrases? What does it mean? We can speak of 'freaks' of a mad man. We can also speak of freaks of a wise man, because even the wisest man is not expected to be all-wise in all times, at all places and in all circumstances. But to extend the frailties of human brain to nature is a mistake that has proved too costly to humanity at large. Most of the beliefs or unbeliefs of mankind can be traced to this mistake. Imagine for a moment what incalculable loss has been done to humanity by astrology, demonology, magic and spiritism which all aim at appeasing the freakful demon. If the governor of nature, or nature itself, if it is competent to govern itself, is so freakful,

then what hope for science, scientific knowledge or any knowledge at all, accurate, semi-accurate or even inaccurate? If no hope, then what does the bogus cry of advancement of civilization or knowledge mean? And if it is really all lost, then what would be the fate of the living world if we forget all that we have acquired by way of learning? What the difference between Darwin, the father of modern evolutionism and the protozoa which is alleged to be the father of all of us? I say, if the belief in the eternity of laws is forsaken, then it is absurd to infer anything about the invisible past or the invisible future and equally meaningless to speak about the limitedly visible present.

I know that a certain class of philosophers—I do not know if they are scientists also,—hold that our knowledge of the universe is so meagre and the means at our disposal to know the universe are so very limited that to call ourselves the knowers of the universe is to misuse the term. We may all share this pessimism. But when we see that from the very dawn of life, we have been constantly busy in increasing our knowledge, and however weary or hopeless, we have given no signs of coming to a standstill, we cannot but conclude that there

is a remarkably strong optimism behind all this pessimism and even the tallest sceptic amongst us, if consistently sceptic he is, is actuated by an impulse to shake off his scepticism and come to believe in the eternal character of the laws of nature. Herein lies our solace ; herein lies our salvation.

CHAPTER II

HUMAN LAWS

By human laws I mean not the laws that govern humanity, but the laws which man has enacted for himself or others from time to time.. The laws that govern humanity have been hinted at in the foregoing chapter, as humanity being a part of nature, the laws that govern it are included in the laws that govern nature. But human brain is something peculiar. It has two sides. It is objective as well as subjective. It is created as well as creative; governed as well as governing. As a part of nature it comes within the purview of all physical sciences—mathematics, physics, chemistry, mechanics etc. But it is much more than that. It is metaphysical—something beyond the physical. While the rest of the world is only acted upon, it acts as well as is acted upon. It is not a mere form of matter—not even merely an organised form of matter as besides being *organised* by some *organiser* it goes further, it *itself organises*. It is this organizing capacity of human

brain that has led to so many complications of life. Life is not such a simple thing. Everything in the universe from dew drops to stars and from electricity to gravitation looks much simpler as compared with the workings of human brain. Even the brain of an ant or any tiny insect will appear much more complex than the facts which are governed merely by physical laws. The word 'brain' means much more than physics and chemistry and even mathematics,—hence the difficult nature of the sciences which deal with life—biology, psychology and sociology.

The rigid law of causality taken from the domain of physics has too often been misapplied to brain and the result has been an utter failure in arriving at truth. The question put in the simplest form is as follows :—Is life governed by the same rigid laws as other things ? If so, then in Haeckel's words :

"The chemical properties of carbon are the sole cause of living movement and the simplest form of living protoplasm must arise from inorganic nitrogenous compounds by a process of *spontaneous generation*"¹ or "As the sterner materialists

¹ Dampier Whetham's "History of Science", p. 318.

were fond of saying, life was an *eddy* in the primeval slime.”¹

But “spontaneous generation” and “eddy” give no consolation unless they are explained further. Why should this “spontaneous generation” begin, why should it continue and why should it culminate, in the present condition of human society with all its ethical, æsthetic, religious and social complications? Mere words will not help. They only betray the helplessness of the scientists in explaining things. It is why philosopher-scientists have been forced to “postulate the existence in the universe of an agency or activity which, while using matter in pursuance of its purposes is itself *non-material*,”² and that “Life is the phenomenal disturbance in a world of matter in which a non-material entity has appeared, and that living organisms are the visible signs of its appearance.”³

This non-material entity is man in its most developed form. It is this man that has been constantly changing not only the surface of the

¹ Joad’s “Matter, Life and Value”, p. 5.

² Ibid, p. 26.

³ Ibid, p. 26.

earth but much that is within or without it, now swimming with the current, now against it, but swimming always ; sometimes interfering with or struggling against nature, sometimes cooperating with it ; adjusting himself to the environment or adjusting environment to himself. This relation of man with nature, complicated as it is, is responsible for the innumerable institutions which human will has been able to give birth to. Society is but another name for the manifestation of the adjustment of will with nature. Will and nature are not the same thing, nor are they such two, as to be thought of as independent, unconnected or unconnectable. Yet their connection is not the same in all times and at all places. Had it been so, the responsibility of man would have been much minimised and there would not have been so many variations. But man has always striven to ride nature and nature like a docile horse has invariably submitted to the will of the rider unless the latter becomes too rash, too impatient or too rough-shod.

Human laws are an effort on the part of man to effect this adjustment. They accord with the laws of nature in the sense that they cannot violate the latter ; it is impossible for them to do so.

They are human in the sense that their aim is to carry out the wishes of their author. How far they fulfil this aim depends upon the insight and far-sightedness of man. The success of a rider depends upon his capacity to know the horse, to know the way and to know the destination. If he makes mistake anywhere, he is doomed. Similarly if and whenever man fails to understand nature, he fails. This failure on his part is due to his own shortcomings. But are not these shortcomings too a part of nature? They are, but there is an equivocation of terms. 'Nature' when used in this context does not mean physical nature or realm of matter. It covers all realms taken as one. Nature here means matter and life both interwoven.

In this connection two things are specially noteworthy. Man is free and man is finite, both by nature. It is freedom that actuates him to do, not to do; or do otherwise. His limits of judgment check him from riding roughshod. If man were a mere tool in the hand of so-called nature, there would have been no question of right or wrong or failure or success, as these terms always convey an idea of march to some goal and goal always implies a will. Only living beings can

have a goal; lifeless things have no goal of their own. Laws of nature are eternal, unchangeable and constant so far as they concern themselves. They are perfect and faultless, if you like to call them so. But man is progressive. He is moving towards some goal. And as he has a free will, his march is not uniform, nor in the same direction. Sometimes he marches in a straight line, "each to-morrow" finding him "further than to-day," sometimes moving in a mischievous circle like the oilman's bullock, constantly running, but not covering an inch of ground. No doubt.

There is a divinity that shapes our ends. But not as a potter shapes his pots. We have a share, a major share. My meaning will be more clear if I replace 'shapes' with 'helps.' Mere shaping makes man a mere pot—a lifeless pot with no responsibility—not even the responsibility of "rough-hewing." Man 'hews' and 'rough-hews' because he has a capacity to do so and divinity helps not as a potter, but as a friend. This "rough-hewing" and this "helping" acting and reacting bring us to the realm of religion. For what is religion? An effort on the part of the living being to coordinate with nature. Think of a pot that itself tries to help its potter in shaping.

The analogy holds better with a plant in the hand of the gardener. The gardener does not grow the plant. He simply helps it in its growing. The growing process comes from within the germ itself. The gardener only checks it from either dying away or running riot. The coordination which the germ offers to the laws of botany is its true religion. Similarly, the coordination which a man submits to the laws of nature is his true religion. All the laws that man has made from time to time point to this coordination. They are not eternal as laws of nature are. They are changeable. They are as fickle as man himself. They vary from time to time and place to place. But one thing is constant there—it is the will and the effort on the part of man to coordinate.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION

The word 'religion' comes from the Latin root '*ligare*' to bind. Religion has been often explained as a set of rules that bind man. This has naturally elicited protest from the freedom-loving people. Why should man who is inherently free submit himself to any outside agency? Why should man worship God for fear of hell or love of heaven? Is he not the shaper of his own destiny? Will he not reap as he sows? Where does God come in the daily life of man and why should? Are not so many religious formulas a humbug?

Religion, they say, is an opium that has intoxicated the mind of man. It has retarded human progress. It has set man against man. Do not religious people quarrel like dogs? Has not this hankering after God made man dogly? Has not religion made man abandon reality and run after will-o-the-wisp? These are the questions with which the atmosphere stands charged and even a

man in the street exults in answering them in the affirmative.

There may be a grain of truth in it, but only a grain—not more—not the whole truth. First of all, man is free in a certain sense only. He is not a despotic ruler of the universe. Even his rule over his body is also of a dubious character. He did not make his body nor the body *always* obeys him. A little disturbance, here or there, is sufficient to render him a cripple or a lunatic. Then there are natural forces that always put a premium upon his liberty. He has constantly to struggle in order to make a headway and it is not infrequently that he has to admit his weakness. Then again, there are other beings exactly like himself in the form of man or greatly similar in the form of other animals. Their wishes clash with his. Not only that. Go a step further. Man does not always wish alike. His angle of vision changes. Hatred and love alternately take him in grip. He moves, he does not know whither? He acts, he does not know why? In the midst of such jarring interests he has to find a solution. He has to steer clear through such eddies. Even the proudest in our midst has to come to his knees one day and admit his defeat. Such is man with

all his haughtiness, all his vanities. He may forget his past, he may not care to ascertain his pre-birth life, but he has to take cognisance of his future. He may have come to the world anyhow, all of a sudden by chance or through a series of cause and effect. He may have suddenly risen up from nothing or may have a beginningless past, but he cannot shut his eyes from future. He has to take into account his goal. Even the most foolish among us has some foresight, however short it may be. He is anxious about his future, about what he shall be. This anxiety coupled with an idea of his limitations and helplessness, forces upon him a conviction about a super-human or even super-natural agency, the agency that not only controls nature but either thwarts or helps his actions. He may delude himself by believing that he is the master of all things or he may think that the world is only a blind alley or a blinding riddle. But such a belief does not last long and he has to disillusion himself one day. Even the staunchest of disbelievers have experienced such feelings at least at the time of their death. It is said of Bradlaugh that through his whole life he poohpoohed the idea of a divine super-human Being and though he ridiculed the idea of his own

spiritual existence apart from his material body, when the end drew nigh, a very strong feeling overtook him that he was being drawn towards some unknown goal of which he had no definite idea. This feeling, call it illusion if you like, is the corner-stone of religion and cannot be shaken off so easily. If it is an illusion, it is such an illusion as is inherent in our very nature and cannot be got rid of by dry logic. You may not find a strictly logical proof for it. But you cannot deny that there is much in the world which your logic cannot measure. Did not Zeno boast to have proved that Achilles, the swiftest Greek hero could not overtake the slowest tortoise in the race? But was it a fact? Do you not see to-day that an ordinary boy would catch a tortoise? Zeno's logic does not reason about the realities, and must perforce be fallacious. Boys daily run races in schools and win prizes for beating their rivals, in spite of Zeno and his peculiar notions about Time and Space. If your logic so reasons as to bring you to absurdities, it will not and cannot remain your guide for a long time. You must detect fallacies and if you cannot *detect* them, you must at least *feel* them. Hume was a well-known sceptic, but one has to sympathise with him when he says:—

"Most fortunately it happens that, since reason is incapable of disputing these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation and lively impression of my senses which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther."¹

Look at these, according to Hume well reasoned speculations of his and also at the nausea which he feels for them. The thanks which he thought it superstitious to render to his maker, he was compelled to pay to nature, not blind nature, but—nature that is *purposive* and "cures" him like a benign healer or kind mother.

Religion has for a long time been a bugbear. It has been a butt of charges from scientists, philosophers and sociologists. But if we look at the reasons and motives which are not the same in

¹ Aikin's "Philosophy of Hume".

each case, we can understand the situation better. The first-named, i.e., scientists ridiculed the idea of God and therefore of religion for two reasons, one that at every discovery that a peep at nature awarded them they were opposed by religionists, priests and preachers and their blind followers; the other that "The conception of *nature* has often been taken as one which is clear and sufficient, and it has been uncritically assumed that we need no further account of the purpose of science than that it seeks to understand *nature*." But now "Science itself has found that it cannot pursue its legitimate investigations without raising some of the most profound philosophical problems, and moreover, the progress of science, particularly of physics has seemed to throw light upon those problems." "The foundations of materialism have, however, been destroyed by the results of the research into the atom and the equally revolutionary views of space and time to which physics has been led." "The position into which the more recent study of nature is taking us is one in which we are almost compelled to face the question whether we are not forced to postulate mind as the ultimate reality¹

¹ Prof. W. R. Matthews on "The Idea of God" in "An Outline of Modern Knowledge," p. 59.

and conceive nature as a complex thought."

No wonder if one of the greatest scientists of today Max Planck is forced to say:—

"There can never be any real opposition between religion and science; for the one is the complement of the other. Every serious and reflective person realizes, I think, that the religious element in his nature must be recognized and cultivated if all the powers of the human soul are to act together in perfect balance and harmony. And indeed it was not by any accident that the greatest thinkers of all ages were also deeply religious souls, even though they made no public show of their religious feeling. It is from the cooperation of the understanding with the will that the finest fruit of philosophy has risen, namely the ethical fruit. Science enhances the moral values of life, because it furthers a love of truth and reverence, love of truth displaying itself in the constant endeavour to arrive at a more exact knowledge of the world of mind and matter around us, and reverence, because every advance in knowledge brings¹ us face to face with the mystery of our own being."

¹ Max Planck's "Where is Science Going", p. 169.

Philosophers I leave alone as unless science and philosophy work together it is vain to arrive at any thing useful. Those days are gone when philosophies were constructed without working out the details of facts of the world. Then it was the mind of the philosopher that made the world of its own and like Zeno falsified the common experiences of man. Now scientific discoveries give rise to philosophical hypotheses and these latter have to be checked by constant reference to the former.

Sociologists have reasons of their own in opposing religion. They want a revolution in the human society but the established religions are a hindrance in their way. Therefore, they want to strike at the very root of the evil. But a little investigation will show that they are too short-sighted. They say that God is nothing and if we have to worship anything, we should worship humanity. "Let us transfer the religious emotions from the Deity of the traditional religion to the conception of humanity as whole." True it is that religion minus humanity is no religion at all. Nor I think the founders of religious systems ever ignored humanity. But pray, what is 'humanity as a whole' if not a sum-total of all men? And

what does the transferring of devotion from God to humanity mean? What form of humanity do we propose to worship? Humanity that exists? Is it uniform and perfect? The worshipper himself is a part of that humanity. To worship humanity means to worship himself. Worshipping always implies the rise of the worshipper to the elevation of the worshipped. Does it not lead to mischievous circle? I am trying to rise to my own level! Trying to make myself what I am! I think we are vague about our idea of worship. To *serve* humanity is one thing, to *worship it* quite another. When we serve humanity, we mean to take other man with us in our march towards some goal. If we worship "idealised humanity," we would be worshipping what does not exist except in our own mind. Again the same trouble, the mischievous circle does not leave us.

Fortunately saner ideas have begun to prevail, the anti-religious campaign that began more than a century ago and subsequently filtered down to the masses, has left its hold on thinking brains and the storm which is more visible in the lower strata and therefore more furious too, will subside in due course. Anti-religious movements were born in high brains, they remained there

some time, and took long time to come to mass-mind. They appear to be more prevalent now and may possibly linger longer. But the change of mentality in higher circles is sure to bring about a change in mass-mind too. We have had a sufficient experience and bitter experience too of such movements and a reaction is sure to take place.

CHAPTER IV

GOD

This brings us face to face with the question about God. The Bible says that God made man in His own image. It does not say in whose image He made the universe! Nor what or of what kind God's image is. But there are people who say that man made God in his own image. It is not quite without reason. Man's image is well-known and God has often been thought like himself. The physical images of God found all over the world point to this truth and the mental images formed from time to time are not very dissimilar. Our mythologies abound with such things. We are the potters of our gods and goddesses. We are their wire-pullers and they dance at our suggestions. They walk like us, they eat like us, they drink like us, they love and marry like us, they hate and fight like us, they win or lose like us, they are born like us, they live like us and they die too like us. Still they are gods, immortals and unchangeables because we want to

make them such or think of them as such. In all ages such thinking people as wish to go out of the common rut have raised their voice against such gods and goddesses. If they are men, however big, however extraordinary, they should remain men. Why should they claim to be super-human? If they are not men, there should be a distinct line of demarcation. Why should they have our limitations? Man-god and God-man are meaningless terms and they have produced such a confusion in human thought that religion and religious practices have all been woefully contaminated. Why try to deify our great men! Why not humanize them? If there is God, let Him remain such in His own domain. Why should He be dragged down to our own level? If there is no God, why delude yourself by attributing to real man those unreal qualities which nowhere exist and which are only fabrication of ingenious brains?

This process of deifying men or personifying God is not confined to idolators, image-worshippers or polytheists. Even those who claim to be monotheists are as much victim to this evil. They have made their God, if not in their own image, in the image of their great men at least. They

have taken their cue from a despotic ruler, who does whatever he likes, quite unchecked. He has a throne with a brilliant and pompous court and innumerable attendants in the form of angels. He makes this world good or ill, happy or miserable simply to show his glory just as Shahjehan built the Great Taj to leave his memory or manifest his grandness. Why did He make us? What right have we to put this impertinent question? Is He not our All-powerful master? Are we not His humble creation?

This is all anthropomorphism—a disease responsible for so many evils in the domain of religion. If humanity is to be raised from the level of barbarism, we should go deeper and see if there are higher principles underlying the existence of the world as well as our own existence. We believe in God not because we want a greater man to govern the universe, but because our own being and other beings like us are not sufficient to interpret what is around us. Our inner craving to seek an explanation of what we are, what others are and why are we so or others so, urges us to go beyond our narrow selves.

God's existence has often been questioned and validity of theistic proofs criticised. We shall

here mention the three well known ones called Cosmological, Teleological and Ontological.

Cosmological proof is from a machine. They said that every machine has a maker and as the universe is also a kind of machine, it should have a creator, i.e., God. The critic says that this proof is based upon the erroneous and long exploded machine theory of the world. The world is not a machine and hence postulates no mechanic. Much has been said for and against this. But inference of cause from effect has not been entirely denied. When they compared the world with a machine and deduced the existence of its author, they did not mean to use the word machine in all its aspects, nor any analogy is ever all-congruent. Whether a machine or an organism, the question still holds good. The Teleological or Purpose argument has often been rejected as it scrutinizes the effect with a view to discover the character of the cause. It is said that a God who makes the world in order to fulfil a purpose is not a self-sufficient being and therefore no God at all. Then there are many who see no purpose in the world. They attribute all that is going on in the world to chance—the origin of the world, its continuance and its end. What this *chance* means,

very few tarry to define. It has been a fashion to set up chance as a god of scientists. But anybody who observes modern scientific tendencies cannot but feel puzzled "To know that there are still a few distinguished men of science who can bring themselves to believe that the universe we know and all that therein is came into existence by chance, developed into its present state by chance, and produced intelligent human beings by chance. They seem to be obsessed with the idea that it is a sign of intellectual decrepitude to suggest that, behind it all, there must be some organized plan, some purpose..... All men of science are familiar with thousands of facts in the inorganic world that point to a wonderful scheme of organisation and coordination and to account for these things they postulate atoms, forces, waves, and what not, and they advance explanatory hypothesis by the score. But a few of them are in such dire terror of cutting their fingers with Occam's razor that they refuse to hypothecate the existence of just one more elementary thing, viz., *life*. They invent, say, an atom, which is no longer an inert thing, but a wonderfully organized complex system of electrons in perpetual motion, but they deny, again

because of the razor, that behind the invention there is some form of *intelligence*.¹ How can we deny purpose? Following quotations from the same book are worthy of the notice of reader:—

1. *The atom*—Let the reader consult a few leading modern works on atomic physics and then try to construct a model of one of the heavier atoms, that marvellously complex thing with shell after shell of its constituent electrons all placed in position, a model say the size of a cricket ball, which he can easily manipulate. Now let him try to imagine the model of a machine in actual motion, the parts moving with incredible speeds. Then let him try to imagine the model shrink to the size of the smallest visible particle of dust, the machine as a machine still running, and with undiminished speed. Lastly let that tiny machine shrink and shrink and shrink until it is a millionth of its dust-particle size, but still running, and all its parts to run on, if not interfered with, for æons of time.—What an amazing design!

2. *Man himself*—Still full of imperfections he undoubtedly is, but think of him a hundred

¹ F. W. Westaway's "Obsessions and Convictions of the Human Intellect", p. 289.

million years ahead. Even now, what an amazing design.

3. *The Universe*.—As we have already pointed out, our sun is one of a hundred thousand million stars in a single galaxy and the galaxy is only one of a hundred thousand million galaxies already known. Again, what an amazing design!

We need not dilate further. Nothing but hair-splitting can convince us that there is no design, or that it is all chance. As to the question that the purposiveness of the world brings a charge of imperfection against the designer, we shall deal with it later. Suffice to say that the designer is imperfect only when he designs for himself. If his aim is, as the aim of God is, to help imperfect beings in furthering *their* development, the charge loses all its force. You cannot be called selfish if you help others in making their condition better, and you are surely selfish and therefore blamable, if you sit silent. If development is the aim of the universe, as all evolutionists say, then not only an amazing design, but also an amazing perfection of the designer is proved. Teleology is writ large on the face of the Universe. And teleology pervades through all human thoughts and activities, to deny it is to deny the reasonableness

of human reason.

As to the argument named ontological or *a priori*, there has been much hair-splitting on both sides, and this hair-splitting is due not to the shortcoming of the reasoning but to the imperfections of human language in which the reasoning is expressed. For instance St. Anselm said that as we have inwardly a concept of a perfect Being and no Being can be perfect unless He exists, therefore the existence of God is a necessity of thought. This line of reasoning has been torn to ribands by several thinkers.

Kant says that just as my *idea* of a hundred dollars in my pocket does not necessitate the *existence* of a hundred dollars in my pocket, just so my *concept* of a perfect Being does not necessarily prove the existence of such a Being. "Kant's example, as Hegel remarked, appeals at once to the ordinary understanding; for there is nothing the plain man can grasp more clearly than the difference between the idea of money and money in pocket." But even Kant cannot deny that there is some sort of correspondence between human thought and realities. The existence of a super-human intelligence is forced upon our mind, not only empirically but from within; and with such a vehe-

mence, that in spite of all the shortcomings of the logical form in which we are able to put it, we cannot shake it off altogether. Speaking of Science, Max Planck said: "Science thus brings us to the threshold of the ego and there leaves us to ourselves. Here it resigns us to the care of other hands." I would like, in this context, to replace 'science' by 'logic' and will go on with him when he says that "mankind has need of fundamental postulates for the conduct of everyday existence and this need is far more pressing than the hunger for scientific (I should say here *logical*) knowledge."

God does exist it is difficult to deny. To define Him (i.e., to circumvent Him with verbal or logical limitations) is much more difficult than to define the geometrical point. Yet neither any geometer has ever forsaken point, nor humanity will ever rise above theism. All the wranglings about God and His attributes are due to limitations and shortcomings of human language, which even the greatest atheists have to admit in the long run.

CHAPTER V

THE SOUL

"Soul" is a long abandoned word in the realm of philosophy. Its place has now been taken by "self". But even 'self' has been used very vaguely. Sometimes in order to lighten the responsibility of believing in a concrete substance, lest one should appear dogmatic, mind and similar other names have been suggested. But words do not matter much. Of late the tendency has been to shift from a concrete object to abstract functioning. They say that there is no proof whatsoever of the existence of a concrete substance like the soul which might govern this material body. It is all a function. Just as *definite* "God" was abandoned for the sake of indefinite "nature", similarly definite soul has been abandoned for the sake of an indefinite function. What is the exact import of this 'function' one can say with difficulty. If not a thing, is it an attribute? If so, of what? Or a particular way of working? If so, of what? Those who wish to be indefinite may gladly choose to be so.

The simple question is: "Is there any such thing as the soul, spirit, or the self which works through this body, governs it within certain limitations and is not itself body or any of its phases?" And another, allied to the former or rising from it, is whether this soul existed before the creation of the body and will remain existent after the body has been dissolved at the time of death.

We have seen that the universe must have a governor, intelligent and strong, driving the whole machinery in pursuance of a definite purpose. Him we call God. This God governs my body too as He governs the rest of the world. He cannot be the governor of the whole world minus my body. I do not feel that I am the master of all the parts or all the functions of my body. I did not make my eye. I found it made for me. Nor is this eye always submissive to my orders. It aches when I do not want it to ache, it weakens when I do not want it to weaken. So on and so forth. Yet it is *my* eye. I use it for my purpose. I close it at my will. I open it at my will. If I do not transgress my jurisdiction, it is obedient to me for all practical purposes. This means that in the Government of my body besides God who is the common governor of the universe, I am

also an important sharer. 'I' and 'mine' are common words and by no means meaningless. This *I-ism* and *mine-ism* is exhibited very distinctly at the point where art is divided from nature. You talk of the sun and of the lamp. This is art, that is nature. You see the Himalayas, you see the Taj Mahal. The one is nature, the other art. You see a sand dune, you see an ant-hill. Again, the same distinction. Efforts have been made to obliterate this difference. But with all philosophical or quasi-philosophical wranglings, the two are distinctly two and not one.

Is the soul separate and separable from the body? Certainly not separate. Or it would have been difficult to govern the body. Then separable? How to prove it? Nobody had seen the soul before it entered and took possession of the body. Nor is it possible to see it after death when it has left the body. Then, are not body and the soul simply two different names of the same thing seen from different angles? This is what hylozoists like Haeckle say. They say that life and matter or body and the soul are so interwoven that it is difficult to think of one without the other. The winking of eye is as much a bodily action, as the action of the soul. It is impossible to draw a line of

demiarcation. To postulate the existence of the soul before the birth of the body or after its death as has been the custom so far with religionists or non-philosophical persons is a mere superstition. This is how the modern world thinks.

But we forget one thing. The nature of the case is such as to preclude all chances of the experimental proofs demanded. You want to see the soul separate from the body before the birth or after the death before you believe in its distinct existence. Well, how can you do it? What means have you to make such observations? If not, then what grounds have you to categorically deny it? This argument if logically pursued can utmost lead you to doubt, you can only say, it may, it may not. Then there is another thing. If the soul is only a particular phenomenon of the constituents of the body then how to explain the appearance of life, consciousness, consciousness of this consciousness—I mean, all grades of life from the motion of an insect's wings upto the philosophical discussions of the brain of the most learned amongst us? Do you think that chemistry and physics are adequate enough to explain them? No doubt the last century scientists believed so.

Tyndall presiding over the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1874 had sanguine hopes that some day mere physical science would explain on physical basis only, without positing anything like life or spirit. All the phenomena "from the atoms of the primæval nebula to the proceedings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science." Latter experiences and subsequent experiments have, however, belied such hopes and now the pendulum of thought has just gone to the other extreme with the result that Max Planck says:

"Consciousness I regard as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness."¹

Such a revolution in these 57 years. The living cell, the biologists unit, which is the first thing where the scientist sees life appearing, presents following notes :

1. A living cell is highly complex, for transcending our microscopic examination.
2. It cannot represent primordial life.

¹ J. W. N. Sullivan "Interview with Max Planck", *Observer*, January 25, 1931.

3. It has a potentiality of a definite and precise kind.

4. A living cell has appetite for food, can sense food, hunt for food and refuse food if found undesirable. (Note the actions of the amoeba).

5. The division of a growing cell into many cells is too remarkable to be explained on physical basis.

6. Coordination and regulation between innumerable cells.

7. No life has been known to make its appearance on the earth's surface except from antecedent life. (Pasteur's experiments).

There has been so much talk about evolution and evolutionary processes and efforts have been made to explain away the soul on that account. But my simple, straightforward question is this : Admitted that the protozoa could develop into Darwin through evolutionary processes pointed out by Darwin and corrected and amplified by his latest successors. Had that protozoa such potentiality ? You cannot say 'no'. Then where did that potentiality come from ?

All this leads us to believe beyond doubt that the soul is an entity quite separate from matter. It does not rise with the body nor dies away with

it. The body is only its vehicle or medium through which it makes its appearance in the physical world. It existed before and will live after this vehicle. It is immortal.

CHAPTER VI

IMMORTALITY

There are two Sanskrit epithets commonly used for the soul. They are Aja (अज) or beginningless and Amara (अमर) or immortal. There is hardly any religion that denies the latter. But there are many who do not believe in the former. God is the central idea of all religions and with this belief as its basis, it is not difficult to hold that souls are a creation of God, just as the whole universe is. There can be said much against this view. The most strong objections are two. First, if God is an all-perfect, all-intelligent, purposeful entity, the motive of creating so many souls, either abruptly or by slow long-aged evolutionary process is not clear. God made the universe. Why? For whom? To exhibit his glory? To exhibit to whom? To Himself? Nonsense! To others? Who are these others? Secondly, what is the secret of moral responsibility which even those that ridicule religionism cannot explain away? A puppet, a mere creation, has no moral obliga-

tion. The idea of createdness of the soul appears to have had its origin in the credulously exaggerated faith in God or one's abject surrender and resignation to the will of God. "I am nothing and God is everything" is the humble devotee's cry. But this is devotion minus sense. We forget that if we are nothing and God is everything, then God is the creator of nothing and ruler over nothing. Such a lord of nothing, omnipresent with nothing in which to be present, omniscient with nothing to know of, and omnipotent a figure among the ciphers, leaves in God nothing worth having and even worth mentioning. To realize the Great, Righteous and Benign existence of God is one thing and to ignore or reduce to nothing our own importance quite another. Self-abnegation, so much lauded in religious spheres is neither forgetfulness of the self, nor its total annihilation; its real meaning is to seek our limitations and to so regulate our wild desires that there be a perfect coordination and harmony among the desires of numerous selves, of which the society consists. A true devotee does not say: "I am nothing and thou art the Lord of me, i.e., nothing." He would rather say: "Thou art my Lord and I am Thy devotee. I am devoted to Thee as Thy wish is

my emancipation."

To be the creator of the sun, the moon or the world has some meaning. But to be the creator of the soul, or consciousness has no meaning whatsoever, as consciousness or soul is not a being composed of many simpler beings, but one simple, uncompounded entity. Nothing can be created out of nothing. We the souls, are uncreated unborn, immortal eternal beings, the eternal subjects of the eternal Lord. Ours is a beginningless past and an endless future. To confine our existence with birth and death, the two ends of the body, is a great injustice. Those who believe in the immortality of the soul without believing in its beginninglessness commit a logical mistake. What begins must end. What is endless must be beginningless. To be subject to time-limits means to have beginning and end both. If it is true that immortality is ingrained in our nature as about all those who believe in the soul, believe, unbornness is equally ingrained. We all have a craving for longevity. Our instinct of self-preservation causes us to rebel against the thought of extinction. We wish to live endlessly. But if we go deep into our thought, we equally abhor to think of a void when we were not. It is true that an infinite

past and an infinite future are not an open page before eye and the span of our ken is so narrow that we cannot go beyond a certain limit; but what is, is not only that which we know. There is much that is unknown and becomes known under certain conditions. Similarly, what is known once becomes dimmer and dimmer, till it sinks into a deep abyss of oblivion and unknownness.

CHAPTER VII

REINCARNATION

Incarnation means to come into flesh and re-incarnation means to come into flesh again and again. We have seen that the souls are unborn and immortal. Birth of the body is not their birth, nor the death of the body their death. This brings us to the problem of reincarnation. If the soul be an independent entity separate and separable from the body, and if the body its vehicle, then incarnation is an axiomatic truth. We do not know of a soul working without flesh. But the question is whether the soul occupied a body before coming into the present body and whether it will take another body after its death. Ordinarily speaking birth and death are everyday affair, rather every moment affair, as every moment we feel that some part of our body (some cell) decays and another fresher one takes its place, yet we remain the same. A five-year old boy lives fifty years and feels that he is the same. This feeling of sameness in spite of the change, or in

other words, birth and death of thousands of the cells of our body shows that the soul is neither born with these cells nor dies with them. Our body to-day at the age of sixty is not the same as it was when we were two years old, yet our sameness persists. This means that in this sense transmigration or reincarnation is too obvious to be questioned. But there is another aspect. The doctrine of reincarnation means that the soul takes quite a fresh body at the total annihilation of the present body. This many persons deny. To quote Westaway:

"But one objection seems to be fatal: we none of us have the faintest glimmering of memory of a former life. Further, if, as seems to be established we inherit our characters and dispositions from our parents, how can these characters and dispositions be derived from a pre-existent ego of our own? In short, both memory and heredity seem fatal to the doctrine of pre-existence, though some of our ablest philosophers have defended it and have made it the basis of their chief argument in favour of the doctrine of immortality generally."¹

¹ "Obsessions and Convictions of the Human Intellect", p. 451.

We do not agree to the fatality of the two objections. They are merely superficial. It is strange why loss of our memory should be a reason for our non-existence when there are many other cogent proofs. Every man in ordinary daily experience feels that he forgets his past events and believes in their happening, not because he remembers them, but simply because there are undeniable proofs of their having taken place. Memory is surely a convincing proof of the happening of an event. But *loss of memory does not prove its non-existence.* If I remember having seen a particular place, I must believe in the existence of that place at that particular time, but shall I deny the event of my birth in a particular room, in the midst of particular persons, nurse, midwife or attendants of my mother, simply because I do not remember? It is puzzling to me why people, wise as they are, drag in the question of memory while discussing reincarnation.

Similarly the question of heredity. We do inherit *same* characters and dispositions from our parents. But not *all.* We do see born musicians, born mathematicians, born warriors in families where these qualities were not visible in several past generations. A man in his journey from the

very conception upto his old age acquires dispositions and characters not only from the parents, but also from other members of the family or society. This does show that he has an acquiring capacity, but this also shows that the capacity is his own and his acquisition is proportionate to the capacity he has got. Two members living in the same society under the same conditions acquire different characters. Two sons of the same parents are different. Why? Because besides the acquisition which they make, there is a difference of capacities which are distinctly theirs. Our inheriting some of our characters and dispositions from our parents only proves our contact with our parents for a certain time under certain conditions. This does not disprove our capacity which was distinctly ours and which we brought from some other pre-existence. Our father and mother are nothing more than a set of environment in which we sojourned for a time in our journey of life and made some acquisitions. Most of the objections are due to the misunderstanding about the nature of our inheritance from our parents. I have read in Vedic Scriptures that the soul first enters the body of the father and after residing there for some time and acquir-

ing some important characters, enters the body of the mother and finishes the required period of apprenticeship. If this is true, and there is no sufficient ground to think contrary, then it is the most satisfactory explanation of the similarities and dissimilarities which we find between our characters and the characters of our parents which have so much embarrassed our biologists and evolutionists. It is impossible and misleading to depend upon laboratory demonstrations in these matters. In fact we possess no means to go deep at realities. For instance "in form, in size, in composition there is no apparent difference between the human cell and that of any other mammal. The dog, the elephant, the lion, the ape, and a thousand others begin their widely different lives in a house the same as man's. At an earlier stage indeed, before it has taken on its pellucid covering, the cell has *affinities* still more astonishing."¹ The question is where these widely different dispositions keep deposited so long and so undetected? Certainly not in those cells. It is as futile to use microscopes and find the difference between the natures of a dog and a man in their embryonic

¹ The Ascent of Man, p. 79.

cells as to try to read the theory of evolution in the brain cells of Darwin. In fact the depository of these characters is not the material cells, but the immaterial mind which uses these cells only as a means to express a part of himself. The bravery exhibited by a warrior through his sword does not lie in the sword, nor the literary disposition of a writer in his pen. Yet the sword and the pen are the instruments of expression just as those cells are. If you want to trace back the characteristics which an individual has got, do not confine your search to ancestors, though surely these ancestors too have a part. You must take your mind back to the remote antiquities—I mean existence before the ancestral contact—which are quite invisible to your aided or unaided material eye.

The doctrine of transmigration of souls is not only most widely accepted, but the oldest. "This old belief has been held all round the world and was spread in the remote antiquity to such an extent that a learned English Churchman has declared it to be fatherless, motherless and without genealogy."¹

"What resists this belief is Judaism together

¹ Obry's "Du Nirvana Indien."

with the two religions which have sprung from it, because they teach the creation of man out of nothing and they have the hard task of linking on to this belief an endless existence *a parte post*. They certainly have succeeded with fire and sword, in driving out of Europe and a part of Asia that consoling primitive belief of mankind, it is still doubtful for how long. Yet how difficult it was is shown by the oldest church histories. Most of the heretics were attached to this belief. For example, Semonestes, Basilidians, Valentinians, Marcionists, Gnostics, and Manicheans. The Jews themselves have in part fallen into it, as Tertullian and Justinus inform us. In the Talmud it is related that Abel's soul passed into the body of Seth, and then into that of Moses. Even the passage of the Bible, Matthew XVI (13-15) only obtains a rational meaning if we understand it as spoken under the assumption of the dogma of metempsychosis.”¹

“Although few Christians now seem to believe in the pre-existence of the soul, the doctrine is held even at the present day by no less than

¹ “Short Views on Great Questions,” by J. Orlando Smith.

600,000,000 human beings who also, as a necessary corollary, believe in the doctrine of reincarnation and successive lives.

"The doctrine was adopted by Plato himself, who embodied it even in some of his latest works. In his view the number of souls was fixed; birth was therefore never the creation of a soul, but only the transmigration from one body to another. Plato's acceptance of the doctrine is quite characteristic of his sympathy with popular beliefs and his desire to incorporate them in a purified form in his system. The doctrine was also held by certain early Christian sects, and it is part of the creed of modern theosophy."

At first sight there seems to be no reason why those who undertake to prove that we shall survive this life should deny the hypothesis of a former existence. The only explanation seems to be that in modern western thought the great support of the belief in immortality has been the Christian Religion, and any form of religious belief not supported by that religion would not be considered of importance. *Yet there seems to be nothing in the hypothesis of pre-existence incompatible with any of the dogmas which are generally adopted as fundamental to Christianity.*

"If our existence began at some point in time, is it not rational to assume that that existence will end at some point in time? But if we are to continue to exist eternally, is it irrational to assume that we must already have existed eternally?

"Clearly a life which stretched on indefinitely without death would in many respects be fundamentally different from our present lives. Any attempt to imagine how our present lives would be transformed if neither we ourselves nor our fellow-men had any chance of death will make this clear.

"If we end our present life in a state of imperfection, as we must, it is not illogical to assume that there remains a further improvement and advance to be made in the next life, and that future death can only be regarded as improbable when at last we have reached absolute perfection. The natural inference therefore is that this life will be followed *by others like it*, each separated from its predecessor and successor by death and re-birth. Otherwise we shall have to fall back upon the hypothesis that a process of development begun in a single life bounded by death would be continued as an indefinitely long life not divided by birth and death at all. And to suppose, without

any reason, such a change from the order of our present experience seems impossible to justify."¹

¹ "Theology and Religion" by Westaway, pp. 390-391.

CHAPTER VIII

ANIMAL KINSHIP

"The Orthodox contend that what they call the elementary substances taken separately, do not think; therefore man without a soul cannot think; and that as man does think, he must have a soul. This argument, if valid at all, goes much too far; a trout thinks, a carp thinks, a rat thinks, a dog thinks, a horse thinks and by parity of reasoning, all these animal should have immortal souls."¹

Bradlaugh here hits hard his Christian adversary who does not believe that animals have souls. Some Christians (earlier ones) even denied 'soul' to women, saying that God quickened his breath into Adam's body and not Eve's. But Bradlaugh does not know that Indians, the Hindus, the Jainas and Buddhists, all believed and do believe in animal kinship; they believe that all living beings, from tiny insects upto huge elephants, which pass by the

¹ "Has Man a Soul" by C. Bradlaugh, p. 5.

name lower animals have same souls as the lord of animals called man. Not only that. The same soul in its journey backward and forward can take as its abode an ant's body as well as a man's. The difference is in the degrees of development and evolution, the basic nature, Bradlaugh's thinking, remains the same. You can change your abode from a hut to a palace and *vice versa*. Similarly, circumstances can force you to be a monkey, or a cow, a rat or a scorpion, a savage or a saint. This looks so strange, so ridiculous. But more so owing to deep-rooted prejudices. For a Hindu, the idea is as natural as reasonable. And this is the only doctrine that stands reasoning. In fact if all the existent or obsolete species of living beings are arranged in order, they will appear so akin to each other that there can hardly be any fixed parting line. The latest biological researches have discovered that the principles underlying all species are the same, difference is merely in individual application, and that also of degrees. Efforts have sometimes been made to ignore this affinity and emphasize contrast by introducing such terms as *instinct* and *reflex action*. But from Darwin downwards biologists have found such activities which the doctrine of instinct cannot ex-

plain. Darwin in his "Voyage of the Beagle" quotes the case of a crab which "begins by tearing the husk fibre by fibre, and always from that end under which the three eye-holes are situated" and then says : "I think this is as curious a case of instinct as ever I heard of." He has also described the activities of the Epeira. Stout, the psychologist, has discussed at length these activities and has come to the conclusion that "the successive parts of a complex instinctive process, instead of appearing to the observer as a mere sequence of separate reactions each evoked by its own separate stimulus, irresistibly suggest conative unity pervading and connecting them as stages or phases in the development of one continued action."¹

This kinship having been established, the question is whether the soul transmigrates from one species to another.

This question naturally leads to another question, I mean, the question of the origin of species. Until now the western thinkers have known of only two hypotheses in this connection. The one is that "every species is, within certain limits, fixed

¹ Psychology, p. 336.

and incapable of modification; and that every species was originally produced by a distinct creative act." This is the old orthodox Christian view which was prevalent in the West upto half-a-century back and which is still lingering in some quarters. This is the view of the Bible. According to this view God created animals and birds quite separately and without any such thing as "souls." But one species, namely, man he created in special manner. He breathed His own breath into him. This man has a soul, while other animals are soulless. The attack of Bradlaugh referred to in the beginning of this chapter is directed against this view. What this indefinite and undefinable 'soul of man' is the Bible does not say. Nor it throws any light upon the question as to whether it was Adam only into whose body God quickened His breath and that same breath comes down from father to son, or every time a human body is ready, he quickens a fresh breath.

The other hypothesis is of Evolution and is now regarded as a universally established scientific view. According to this theory "all existing species arose from the modification of pre-existing species; these of their predecessors, and so on, backwards indefinitely, as the result of the action

of natural agencies similar to those producing varieties at the present day; and it is a probable, though not a necessary, consequence of this hypothesis that all animal forms have arisen from a single stock.”¹

Here by ‘animal forms’ is meant animal bodies because it is they that characterize *species*. Animal soul is out of question. In science circles it is a sacrilege to go beyond laboratory demonstrations; and superstitious to let metaphysics colour scientific investigations. Yet while thinking out theories about origin of things even scientists find themselves, perhaps unwillingly, dragged into those regions which are beyond physics. Evolutionists have so far studiously avoided all reference to ‘soul’ in establishing their theories and this soul-phobia is responsible for several knots which still lie unsolved. “The whole mistake of naturalism has been to interpret nature from the standpoint of the atom—to study the machinery, which drives this great moving world, simply as machinery, forgetting that the ship has any passengers, or the passengers any captain, or the captain any course.”² Suppose we inherit our bodies, as well

¹ Science and Theology, pp. 159-160.

² “The Ascent of Man,” by Henry Drummond, p. 12.

as characters and dispositions, from our parents, they from theirs, so on and so forth till we come to the first man; and suppose this first man inherits his body as well as dispositions from some ape or ape-like being; and also suppose this ape in a long series, inherits his body and dispositions from a jelly-fish which is the first progenitor of us all. The question is whether it is exclusively *the material body* that inherits, or *some non-material thinking substance along with the material body*? To separate dispositions and characters from the body is impossible. It is these dispositions that play a chief part in effecting bodily modification. A bird sings. Its parents also sang. It inherited the singing character from its parents. Now was it the soulless material body that brought down this characteristic? Or was it some non-material thinking substance that learnt singing while coming in contact with the ancestor singers? Is it possible for a lifeless matter to convey thoughts? It is a question that remains to be solved and until and unless you solve it, the mystery remains a mystery.

There is a third hypothesis quite unknown to scientists or at least absolutely ignored by them. It is exclusively a Hindu view and the present in-

significance of the Hindus in general is one of the causes that it has received no attention. According to this view, characters and dispositions are acquired and carried by immaterial souls from one body to another through the medium of another much finer body, which though material, is so fine that it baffles all laboratory experiments. This body has been named variously as astral body or ethereal body, in Sanskrit *Sukhshma Sharira*.

The Evolution Theory, i.e., the hypothesis No. 2 does not explain death. It does say that the parents send down their dispositions to their children. But their work does not finish with begetting issues. They may live for several years and acquire or mould their character. What will become of these so earned dispositions when they die? Will they cease to exist with the death of their body? Or will they survive and in what form? It does deal with the propagation of the race, but leaves individuals alone. The third hypothesis which for many, is an *established law*, says that the dispositions and characters that we acquire or evolve during our lifetime filter down from the gross body to the astral one and at the time of death, which is the death of the gross body only, the soul through the medium of this

astral body journeys on quite invisibly and finds entry into the body, first of the father and then through father, of the mother. Here the parental contact enables the astral body to further develop and evolve the potentialities. It is this astral body that links one species with another. In fact it is common to all species, the common parent stock of all species. This is the repository of those tendencies which when developed brings about specific distinctions. You can say that it is all conjecture and cannot be proved in the laboratory. True; it cannot be demonstrated. But conjecture it is not. As regards demonstration, it is impossible in case of evolution too. If you just watch an embryo chick in its way on to further development, you will be astonished to find that while the fluid in the egg exhibits no sign of individual characteristics, these characteristics *somewhat* spring up in course of time "as if an invisible modeller were at work." How could this fluid contain all these characteristics and how their manifestation could be brought about is as much unknown to the biologist, as the transmission of the astral body to the Hindu savants. But it explains remarkably how the mutation of the astral body can lead to the change of the grosser

body. In our daily experiences we find a sort of rise or fall in our tendencies either due to some internal cause or environment or both. In this very body of man live saints and brutes alike, and sometimes saints become brutes or brutes saints. This change takes place according to circumstances. It is not so much the change of the gross body as that of the astral body, though gross body too exhibits some signs of the change. Face experts are able to read the heart of their subjects to a certain extent, but to a limited extent only. But if there were a microscope so fine or so astral as to see the astral body, it would have been easier to find that a certain man while possessing human gross body has got a wolvish astral body, or a lionish, or apish. This means that within certain limits it can be said that we begin to change much earlier than our gross bodies can show. And when the change is complete, the gross body is unable to sustain the astral body which at the time of death, seeks another body, suited to its tendencies and begins to evolve the corresponding outer covering. This is the process of transmigration from one species into another which links all the species together without creating physical inconsistencies.

According to this theory all animals are

originally alike, insects, ants, monkeys, cows or men. They are souls first and animals afterwards. As souls they think and feel and will. As animals they think differently, feel differently and will differently. You can understand this by an analogy. Indians, Englishmen, Russians and Negroes are men first and Indians or Englishmen etc. afterwards. As men they are alike, they laugh alike, they weep alike, they eat alike, they sleep alike, they are born alike and they die alike. But as individuals of different nationalities, they speak different languages, wear different dresses, and use different kinds of furniture.

The origin of new species has always been a disputed point among evolutionists. Darwin thought that "The distinctive characteristics of a species may very gradually arise as the result of the accumulation of continuous variations." While the other school ushered by De Vries maintained that the distinctive characteristics may arise, by saltatory variations or sudden jumps. "There is experimental evidence that certain characteristics refuse to blend." But why and how this sudden jump takes place could not be satisfactorily accounted for. Howsoever popular, the theory of evolution is still a theory and has many knotty points to

solve. A few hints may be noted here:—

(1) Did the first protozoa appear at one place or at several places?

(2) If at one, why so? If at several, was the process parallel to each other? If so, what was there to make the process so uniform?

(3) If the object was the fittedness to physical environment, why did it not stop at lower animals, as man is the most unfitted to his environment?

(4) Natural selection is contradiction in terms as selection always implies judgment or mental action.

If we could follow the line of thought suggested by the third hypothesis, it is possible to arrive at some solution.

CHAPTER IX

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

The purposiveness of the creation is evident everywhere but what that purpose is it is difficult to discern. If there is an intelligent creator then all His actions should be directed to some goal. No sane man will do a thing for nothing. But if the creator is all perfect and self-sufficient then He need not create at all. Thus we find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma. Either God is perfect or not. If perfect, there is no need of creation. If imperfect and innately imperfect, the creation which He makes will always remain imperfect. Westaway in his "Science and Theology" suggests a solution by assuming a compromising attitude. Which school of theologians he represents, it is difficult to say. I think it is solely his view, novel as well as solitary. But as it gives us an opportunity to examine the two sides of the shield, we are tempted to quote it *in extenso*. "Omnipotence," says he, "connotes infinite power, though this need not be taken to include power to override the

laws of identity, contradiction, and excluded middle power to make the sum of two and three amount to six; for, to the human intelligence, that would be unmeaning. But it is not possible to attribute to God infinite power even in the ordinary sense, for otherwise how are we to explain the existence of suffering and wickedness? Is the human reason satisfied by the statement that God is the cause of all things, and that it is part of His purpose to allow evil as well as good though His reasons are unknown to us? *Is not the human reason far better satisfied if we attribute to God what is good and seek elsewhere for the cause of the evil. It is impossible to reconcile in a creator of such a world as ours infinite benevolence and justice with infinite power.* If, however, we suppose limitation of power, there is nothing to contradict the supposition of absolute benevolence and absolute wisdom. *But nothing obliges us to suppose that the knowledge any more than the power, is infinite,* though both the knowledge and the power must be of so vast an order as to be beyond human conception.”¹

“It is thus possible to see how the phenomena of cruelty, injustice, and suffering may be recon-

¹ Westaway’s “Science and Theology,” P. 360

ciled with the existence of an all-wise and all-beneficent creator. If the existence of a Supreme Being is granted, the phenomena can be accounted for by the hypothesis of limiting conditions of some kind: either that the action of the Supreme Being is thwarted by the refractory nature of the material in which the divine purpose seeks realisation, or that the Being is struggling with some intractable force or with some maleficent essence which he is slowly subjugating and subduing to his will and thus to his final good. *We refuse instinctively to sacrifice the Deity's attribute of benevolence to that of former, for, though forced to recognise the indubitable evidence of some limitation of attributes, we prefer to deem that of power limited rather than that of Goodness. This is certainly a more reverent view of the Deity than the hypothesis of an Omnipotent Being who could, by the mere expression of will, remove all cruelty, injustice, and suffering from the universe, and yet failed to do so.*¹ (Italics are ours).

Here Westaway admits (1) that there is God, (2) that He is all-benevolent, (3) that He is also just, (4) that He is not infinite either in power or in knowledge, and (5) that like a cautious and wise ruler, He is trying to subdue and subjugate to His

¹ Westaway's "Science and Theology," p. 360.

will some intractable force or maleficent essence with all the tact He possesses. Westaway thinks that this novel position of His, unthought of by the godlies of the past, will remove all inconsistencies, and establishing God on an unshakable throne, will seal the mouths of atheists for ever. But all is not gold that glitters. If God is the creator of the whole universe, why did He create the 'intractable force' or 'maleficent essence' which He likes to subdue, but cannot? If He is benevolent, why did He create the sick, the needy, the blind, the cripple? Either say that He is not the creator at all, but merely a benevolent spectator from a respectful distance, or admit that there is some power above Himself that compels Him to create ugly and painful creatures. Even benevolence implies some independent separate being who is needy of your benevolence, not because you have made him needy, but because he was so in spite of you and you condescend to help him. To first create a being, then put him in need of something and then to extend your helping hand, is no benevolence at all but just the reverse of it. Besides as soon as you deny God's infiniteness and put a limit to His power or knowledge you take away from Him all god-head and set

up a higher being, a greater God as His rival. This rivalry, if successful, will in turn, disturb all order, all design, all purposefulness, in fact, demolish the whole foundation on which theism is based. God will no longer remain an object of worship or even reverence as the devotee will be quite uncertain of God's achievements and unwilling to rely upon such a weak proof. My mother though the kindest of all human beings is not reliable simply because she is weak. Benevolence coupled with weakness of power leaves nothing desirable in it.

The question now is what is the purpose of God in creating this universe. To do good? To whom? To those whom He has Himself created? Or to some beings not created by Him, but self-existent like Him? To bring to perfection? Whom? Those imperfect beings which He has so created? Or those who are not created by Him, but are imperfect by their very nature or essence? Or lastly to perfect Himself, he being imperfect in some respects? If so, who will perfect Him if there is none more perfect than Himself?

Before we are able to discuss the problem let us, by way of digression, tackle another problem which may possibly help us later on.

CHAPTER X

MONISM AND PLURALISM

The problem referred to at the end of the last chapter is whether the principle underlying the universe is one or many or in other words, whether it is universe or multi-verse. Many-ness or plurality is obvious, even to a lay man. But philosophers, at least most noted of them, say that it is only a lay man that sees plurality. Philosophers ought to go deeper down and discover unity in the midst of the diversity. What is this many-ness then? Several answers have been given :

1. The Being is one, absolute without the second, and devoid of all attributes, as attributes mean many-ness. All else is not Being, but becoming, an illusion, an unreality, a nescience or Maya. The Being is rest, the Becoming is motion. Motion is unreality not proved and not provable. (Parmenides, Zeno, Shankaracharya).

2. The Being is one. It manifests itself into many through the medium of its own nature.

It is one. It becomes many. Just as the seed is one. It evolves into multiplicity of leaves, branches, flowers etc.

3. The Being is *one* united whole. *Many* are its parts just as the Ocean is one, but drops are many. The tree is one, but its branches are many.

4. Essence is one. Forms are many. John, James and Harry are mere forms. The *man* which is their essence is *one*.

5. Mind and matter which give us a show of plurality are only two different modes (Sanskrit: Prakara) of the same reality—*One in many*.

These and similar other answers carry one with an impression that however great the desire of philosophers to reduce many into one, manyness is so deep-rooted that it is impossible to get rid of it. You deny plurality calling it an illusion. Sometimes we are subject to illusions such as we see many objects in dream while there is none actually existent. But to say that we *always* dream and *nothing but dream* is an assertion too bold to be convincing. Then the question is that if all becoming is an illusion and the Being is only one then who is it that is subject to illusion and why? What is there in that one being which causes these illusions?

You take the analogy of dreams. But remember that plurality in dreams is due to the actual plurality realised in the wakeful state. If you do not see horses, cows, dogs and elephants while wakeful you will have no dreams of these things. Besides to reduce the world to mere illusion is to deny God, all that led us to the idea of God-head. God is often compared with a magician who, with a magic wand so to speak, brings into appearance what is not real. In these days when scientific knowledge has so advanced and the tricks of magicians are no secret mysteries, to rely upon such analogies is an insult to human reasoning. Even the great Shankaracharya, perhaps the greatest of all monists could not be all through consistent while explaining creation. In his great commentary of the Vedanta, he begins with the illusory character of the twoness of the subject and object in knowledge. He says that "Knowledge is a relationship between a subject and an object: the relationship is that of awareness of the object by the subject; but neither the awareness of the subject nor the object of which there is awareness is dependent for its existence upon or reducible to the other." But in knowledge not only are subject and object related, but they are also adapted to each other. "This adaptation cannot

be regarded as a merely fortuitous occurrence; it can only be explained on the assumption that both the entities adapted are expressions (or creations) of something more fundamental than either. Since both are expressions of or emanations from this more ultimate something, there is a kinship between them which *proves their apparent twoness to be illusory.*"

Joad after quoting this argument rightly refers the reader to "Professor Royce's explanation of what is implied in the fact that the cat is able to look at the king."

With this enunciation of his theory Shankaracharya sets to explain why God creates the world. If God is perfect, He has no need, no deficiency. "Either God is not perfect and creates the world because He feels some need, or He did not create the world, in which case He is not infinite, since something, namely that which He did not create, exists besides and in addition to God."

A great puzzle indeed. But Shankaracharya has a solution. He suggests "That God although perfect is unable to contain himself in His perfection. He feels a need to express Himself, so great is His joy, so perfect His goodness that He overflows. Just as the artist inspired by beauty feels

a need to express himself by creation, so also was God moved to create the world, not out of any deficiency or lack, but out of the very fullness and abundance of His goodness.”¹ How grand! How beautiful! But how inconsistent! God’s goodness overflowing into the creation of the blind, the cripple, the miserable. Then again the artist does not merely create; he creates in a medium which is other than that which he creates. If there were no material medium the artist’s inspiration would be denied expression. Creation is always creation out of something. “Here we find a good example of the way in which a philosopher starting with the best will in the world to achieve a monism is driven by sheer force of logic to postulate a Dualism.”²

Where Shankaracharya fails, lesser philosophers cannot be expected to be more successful. Plato, for example, though not always very definite, holds the forms as eternal and immutable, not created by God, nor owning any kinship with him, and God modelling the sensible world out of some alien material which is other than the forms and other than God on the pattern of the

¹ Joad’s “Matter, Life and Value,” pp. 40-41.

² Ibid., p. 41.

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farms. (See the *Timaens*).

Aristotle is also a monist though in some sense. Let us try to follow his argument. (1) God's knowledge is best. (2) God is the best. (3) Therefore God knows the best, i.e., Himself. (4) Therefore God is the only reality. The argument is very charming. But the charm is too superficial. The *best knowledge* is not the knowledge of the best, but the *most accurate* knowledge of anything. God's knowledge is the best, not because He knows Himself only and not anything that is less good than Himself. It is best, because He knows everything, good, bad or indifferent, more accurately than any other intelligent being. To prove God's knowledge the best, Aristotle reduces God to a being who knows nothing else. Knowledge of error is itself knowledge and the best knowledge. To know an error otherwise than as an error will not be knowledge but ignorance, though that error itself is bad.

Some persons have tried to prove the illusory character of the world by bringing in relativity. They say that as things are related to each other, therefore they are unreal. But in my opinion, a relation instead of proving the non-reality of a thing, proves the reality of *two* things. If there is a relation

of brotherhood, it shows that there are two brothers between whom the relation hangs. If a thing is related, it is so related because there is something to relate; and as things in the world are related to each other, the conclusion is not monism, but pluralism.

Whatever the form of monism, if analysed to a great length, it cannot but be reduced to pluralism, because the apparent diversity cannot be explained without a real diversity. The Universe is not a Universe because there is only one reality, but it is a Universe because all realities are related to each other. If you say that related things have no absolute existence, they are relative only, then relativity itself cannot in its turn be relative, otherwise *regressus infinitum* will happen. And if relativity is not relative, it is absolute, and will lead to the realness of the related things also. Neither monism, nor dualism, but simple pluralism is the only valid doctrine which our present universe presents. Diversity whether real or even ephemeral cannot be accounted for either by monism or even by dualism. The process of permutation and combination can take place only in things which are more than two, at least, more than one. The whole mathematics is based upon

plurality. Even error to which generally plurality is attributed cannot take place unless there be plurality. If there is only one reality without the second, then neither error of judgment, nor illusion can have any place in the order of things. Who errs? Why does he err? And How? Monism has woefully failed to give satisfactory answer to these questions. Even Berkleyan dictum that we think with philosophers but speak with vulgars, does not hold good as language itself has to be traced back to its origin and in the long run treated philosophically. The space at our disposal is so limited that we cannot touch these points except in passing, but the riddle of life cannot be solved if we try to cling to monism whether material or spiritual, too tenaciously. No doubt, it is a natural desire of the philosopher to reduce the number of realities to its minimum, but how far? After all there is a limit. If there is absolute One, it cannot be many if undivided. And it can also not be many by division, because division always implies inherent plurality.

Take any phenomenon of life. I talk; I talk with my tongue, I feel that I am. Then I also feel that I have my tongue which is other than myself. This shows two things, spirit or ego and

matter or non-ego. (आत्मा and अनात्मा). When I talk, I talk with others, with egos that are like my own ego. If there were no such egos, I could not have been persuaded to talk. This again leads to the plurality of egos. Then the third thing I feel is some higher ego or higher-intelligence which is greater than these lesser egos, with extraordinarily vaster intelligence and power and sway. This super-ego called in Sanskrit Paramatma (परमात्मा) should of necessity be one. It cannot be many otherwise again regressus will result. This is a simple way of reasoning. You may call it superficial if you like. But this is the only view which can explain all diversities and similarities of the phenomena of the world.

Efforts have been made either to explain spirit in the terms of matter or matter in the terms of spirit. We have seen in the foregoing chapters how the former has woefully failed. As to the latter a few points may be noted.

"If the universe is not material through and through, then, they have held, it must be vital or spiritual through and through. This view has been advanced in one or other of two forms. Either the Universe is composed of an infinite number of separate living units (spiritual monad-

ism) or it is the expression of an all-embracing mental entity (spiritual monism). I believe that both these views are mistaken. Spiritual monadism while making allowance for the fact of plurality, treats the plural units affirmed as purely spiritual entities. This hypothesis seems to me to be untenable for two reasons. Either the monads are self contained worlds of experience, windowless; in fact, in which event there is no escape from solipsism, or they are capable of knowing or being aware of something other than their own experience. In the latter event there is, I hold, no reason for supposing that the objects which are revealed to the monad's awareness are other than what they appear to be, from which it follows that *some of them at least are material.*²²

"Spiritual monism denies that reality of plurality, seeking the origin of apparent difference in a fundamental unity. This view is, I think, untenable both because it rests upon a false theory of knowledge and also for certain metaphysical reasons...."

"If both spiritual monadism and spiritual monism prove unacceptable, the grounds for regarding matter as non-existent or illusory disappear."²³

²² Joad's "Matter, Life and Value," p. 29.

Berkeley's invectives levelled against matter were sometimes considered most forceful and there were some who thought that matter was buried deep never to rise again. But in philosophic circles it was soon discovered—that however great and valuable Berkeley's contribution to philosophy, and however interesting and impressive his way of arguing, his theory could not hold water when put to test. Berkeley's reasoning if consistent could only prove solipsism. If all *esse* is *percipi* then neither Berkeley's body exists, nor senses, nor brain, (as they are all material). Even mind does not exist apart from Berkeley's self. Other selves cannot be proved, nor even God. Now remains only Berkeley, one without the second. But this much even Berkeley is not ready to allow. Then with Berkeley's theory you cannot account for errors and their origin. When the teacher censures his pupil for having made a mistake in some question, what does this error mean? My servant measures my table as three feet two inches. I say: you are wrong; it is only 2 feet 11 inches? How will Berkeley's theory explain this fact? Really speaking Berkeley begins with a mistaken theory of knowledge. His sensationalism loses sight of the synthetic process of the mind which all knowl-

edge implies. Soreley has well remarked that "Once we have a judgment, we have before us a question which concerns not the sensations of a subject but the nature of an object."¹

And that "Any argument with another person implies the latter's personal existence and implies also that arguer and argued with are 'up against' the same world; it is legitimate to assume the objectivity of knowledge."²

Some idealistic monists are jubilant over the change that has recently taken place in the realm of physics. The nineteenth century atom, a little, hard solid ball of homogeneous stuff has totally disappeared and its place has been taken by protons and electrons. "The displacement of the old hard impenetrable pebbles by electric charges, or wave radiations, inclines some people to think that matter has lost its materiality and assumed a new spirituality. This reminds one rather of a story told by an eminent ecclesiastic about a young lady who, having strayed so far from the path of virtue as to have a baby, pleaded in mitigation that it was only such a wee little baby! Matter, however refined, is matter still, not mind. More-

¹ "Moral Values and the Idea of God," p. 69.

² Ibid. p. 499.

over, some eminent physicists, like J. J. Thomson, do not accept the non-substantial view of matter in its entirety.”¹

“In spite of the phantasmagoria of changing forms through which in recent years the matter of physics has passed, it is difficult to avoid the reflection that ‘Plus ca change, plus c'est la même chose.’ In spite of the growing tenuousness of matter it is still there, even if it is only ‘there’ in a Pickwickian sense, a sense which must somehow embrace the fact that it is also ‘*then, it is still material*, and it still entirely, and completely determines what courtesy alone entitles us to call mind. Even neutral monism, which might have seemed to put mind and matter on an equality by regarding both as derivative from neutral events, still refuses to proclaim any bounds to the empire of physical law.”²

“The simplest hypothesis,” therefore, “is to deny neither mind nor matter; nor to reduce the one to the other; nor to reduce the two to nothingness, but to admit both.”³

¹ “Recent and Contemporary Philosophy” by Prof. A. Wolf in “An Outline of Modern knowledge,” p. 590.

² Joad’s “Matter, Life and Value,” p. 12.

³ Westaway’s “Science and Theology,” p. 364.

Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj, claims the same, or at least similar view for old Vedic Philosophy, which according to him, inculcates the eternity and oneness of God, the eternity and many-ness of souls and the eternity of matter, which though very complicate for explanation is something not mind, something which serves as vehicle of souls.

CHAPTER XI

PURPOSE AGAIN

After this rather long intervening chapter we find ourselves in a position to take up the old thread and seek in the universe the purpose of creation. Even a fool knows that his eye has been made that he might see. And if you ask why the sun has been created, the simple answer is that it might help the eye to see, as without the sun, the eye would have been useless. Thus we find that our material body has been created for ourselves and as this body cannot work without other things of the world, they are also directly and indirectly connected with us. The difference only is that while my eye is meant for *me* alone, the sun is made for *me*, as well as you and others who are selves or souls like me. These souls are not only human souls but souls of all animals, gigantic as well as tiny, as the principle of intelligence is all along the same, the difference in degrees being proportionate to the difference of material weapon which they are endowed with.

This hypothesis, for sages of the hoary past a well established doctrine, has many advantages over its rivals. First of all, it precludes the drawbacks of the *blind purposeless chance creation* and affords man opportunities to *play the man*. Secondly, it does not saddle divinity with the famous dilemma of "Either cannot or will not." God creates the world not to remove his own imperfections (as there are none), nor to display his own glory (He does not need it); but to help the souls in the removal of their drawbacks or actualisation of their potentialities. Think of a mother who is not herself hungry, preparing food for her children. Or think of a selfless physician, charitably preparing medicine for poor patients from whom he has to gain nothing. Think again of an unpaid kind teacher who, entirely altruistic in motives, makes provision for the dispelling of ignorance of his pupils. Then enlarge upon these conceptions and think of the Great Lord of the Universe—Himself perfect, Himself needless—creating not out of nothing, but shaping out of eternal matter objects which help the souls not only in meeting daily and minutely needs but also in making progress. Under this hypothesis the only weakness that you can point out in God

is this love for these souls. But whether this love is a weakness or strength is a question. My mother loves me and feels for me. The stone in my shelf neither loves me, nor cares for me. Which is the stronger—mother or the stone? What would you have said of a God devoid of such love—quite unattached and neutral? Only neuters can be neutral. For our purposes, God's intelligence lies in his knowledge of ourselves and of our needs and of the means of their removal, His power and will, in his ever-readiness to help us; His goodness in prompting us to be good. His Goodness means for us all these combined. What more God is, we do not know. A baby knows only so much of his mother that she gives him suck and loves him. He does not know any more though in fact, his mother is infinitely more than that much. So is God much beyond our finite kens.

One very forceful objection laid against God is His creation of pain and sin. Nobody can deny the existence of these two undesirables in the world. If God is righteous and loving, he should not have created pain and sin. Therefore either there is no God, or God is unfighteous or God is so powerless that in spite of his will to remove sin and pain, he could not succeed. Under the

hypothesis taken up here these objections are all meaningless. God does not create sin nor pain. These are not the objects of creation. Sin means committing an act which one should not have done or not committing an act which one should have done. Thus sin is ultimately an act of wrong choice between two courses open. This is due to the weakness and ignorance of the soul and not to any defect in God. You cannot ask why God created such weak souls, because as we have seen in the last chapter, souls are uncreated eternals, and their weakness is their own. As regards pain, it follows sin. It is an undesirable child of an undesirable mother. No sin, no pain. All the pain that the souls are subject to is in one way or another result of the sins committed by them in the past (or past life or lives). Pains as pains are no doubt undesirable, but from another aspect they are useful, as it is pain that has remedial effect upon one's nature. All remedies are bitter and every patient hates them. But it is these remedies that cure. If viewed from this angle of vision, however horrible the pain and suffering, they have an important place in the evolution of souls.

People generally condemn earthquakes and similar other calamities, most of which result in

instantaneous death of many. But most of the objections are due to superficial thinking and lack of thorough analysis. What does death mean? Simply a change of life, a door between two rooms. If this passage is painless and instantaneous, it saves the dying person from so many miseries. Even miserable deaths have a value, not the value which we price the highest, but the value which is ultimately helpful in their evolution. While condemning the miseries of the world, man mostly takes no cognisance of his own doings. He violates the law of nature all along and when his transgressions are visited by pain, he frets and fumes and curses his maker. He kills freely but does not like to be killed; he robs, but if any other man robs him, he resents; he thieves but does not bear to be thieved against. He does not know that he is perhaps the wildest, rudest and most brutal of all creatures. In his doings he is free. He could have behaved better, but he did not. Therefore if in order to open his eyes and check the course of his aberrations, God thwarts his movements and puts him under certain sufferings, it is but kindness.

Some say that God, if powerful, should have forced us to do nothing that is not right. Why

did he not check us at the outset ? But they forget that their suggestions if carried out would have evoked much greater objections. God does not see with our limited eyes. Freedom of actions is the greatest blessing, and check upon freedom the greatest curse. You cannot say that freedom is a negligible factor in the evolution of beings or that the progress of evolution would have been accelerated, had there been no freedom. The law of slow and gradual evolution (as contrasted with sudden rise, by magic, of a perfect thing) which we find in the universe has sometimes been taken as a defect in the power of the Divinity. "God said, Be and it became" sounds more lord-like. If God is perfect, why should he make experiments ? What is the need of taking full twenty five years or three hundred months or 9131 days in making a fully grown up youth when it was within the power of God to raise such a one in a minute or in a second ? Why does not God create a fully grown up apple tree laden with fruit in a moment, instead of gradually growing it by slow processes and wasting several years ? These questions are valid only when we deprive the souls of their freedom. As soon as we have admitted that there are free souls, weak and imperfect, yet pregnant with

potentialities, ready to manipulate the material, given them, in their own way and according to their own capacities, the force of objections melts away. Think of a teacher who is so learned as to be able to do an arithmetic sum correctly and in a minute. Will you like him to do that sum himself and in a minute; or will you recommend that instead of doing it instantaneously and in a thorough manner, he should lead his ignorant pupil, step by step in due course to the full understanding of the principle as well as the correct solution of the sum? If the development of the pupil is our aim, the latter must be given preference. If only the answer is required, then you can choose the former. If the teacher who displays his own learning and leaves the pupil alone is a bad teacher, a God who could have produced the most perfect world in an instant merely from his fiat, neglecting the souls or suppressing their freedom, would surely have been a bad and therefore an imperfect God. The standard of the perfection of the universe is to be judged not by the perfection of the maker but by the adequacy of the utility which it provides for the souls. A good architect can make an excellent drawing room for the master and an humbler kennel for his dog. The difference in the rooms

is not owing to the difference in the capacity of the designer, but to the difference in the occupants for whom the rooms are made. The same God makes the ugly mouth of a hog as well as the beautiful beak of a parrot. The difference is due to the users and not to the maker. The world is imperfect so far that it leaves for the souls an opportunity to play their part. It is perfect in the sense that it gives souls full scope for evolving their skill. God's perfection lies in the fact that he knows their individuals and their needs and provides them accordingly. A world perfect in all respects, without leaving anything for the souls to do, would surely have been a very imperfect world from the point of view of the souls and their freedom. The most beautifully and correctly printed book is surely a very bad note-book for a school pupil, because it leaves nothing for him to do. A very great mistake of the theologians has been their total negligence of the souls and undue emphasis upon the all-ness of God. And the great mistake of their critics has been to criticise God's work, from the standpoint of His own selfish purpose and not from the standpoint of the souls, for whom alone, and according to whose needs alone, the world has been wrought. If you examine

minutely one thousand and one arguments advanced by the atheists against theism, you will find most of them either directly based upon, or indirectly arising from the doctrine that only God exists and souls are created by Him from out of nothing. In this respect theologians have rendered a great disservice to theism and therefore to religion. They have left in the fortification big holes for the enemy to enter. The hypothesis propounded in this and the last two chapters will surely modify the situation and will establish religion on sounder footing.

CHAPTER XII

PRIEST AND PROPHET

Priest and Prophet both are intermediaries between man and God. Theirs is a double function. As representatives of man they approach the deity, conveying his salutations and offerings to the most High. As agents of God, they interpret His orders to man and try to bring the Kingdom of Heaven over the Earth. In return for this twofold service they enjoy certain privileges, agreed upon by common consent of the two parties.

Priest and Prophet are both men, but a little above men and a little below God. They are men with a certain percentage of divinity imbibed from within or thrust in from without. This percentage has always and at all places been an apple of discord and most of the religious quarrels, religious bickerings and religious wars have centred round this point. The main religious questions such as what God is, how He governs the universe, what man owes to Him, how man can realize Him, have all been let alone. Their place has

been taken by really insignificant, but actually most emphasized ones, such as, which prophet is the best mediator between man and God, which priest is the most fitted to plead for man before God and which person embodies within himself the highest percentage of divinity.

First let us take up the question of the prophet. He holds the most exalted position, theoretically inferior, but practically superior to the position of God himself. He is the Prime Minister of a nominal monarchy. For all practical purposes he is all in all. You can ignore God for a time. But to ignore the prophet is a heresy which can never be condoned or atoned for. For should you not be constitutional? How can you approach your king direct? If you want to petition the king, you should proceed constitutionally. And if the king wishes to condescend to you, should he not consult his cabinet? The mediators have to be respected. They are an important link and should not be ignored for any reason or in any circumstance. This is the mental attitude of all the religionists, exhibited in daily religious practices and prejudices, in rites performed in temples, mosques and churches, in big religious ceremonials; in small and big cases instituted in

judicial and criminal courts whenever and wherever they have a religious bias; in all religious wars of crusade type, in all inquisitions of whatever type, and above all in all political quarrels into which religion or community has been dragged.

Prophets can best be defined as Divine Men. Their form is that of man. They eat and drink like us. They sleep and wake like us. But there are certain traits in them, implied or expressed, which make them Divine. Some flash of intelligence, not found in ordinary men, some extraordinary feat of strength, not seen in human warriors, even some mystic talk or gestures not intelligible to men in general, raise them above humanity and endow them with partial divinity.

Prophets can be classified into three heads. Firstly, demi-gods of mythologies of different nations. Secondly, incarnations of God. Thirdly, prophets proper or men especially made by God and sent by Him for the guidance of men. They include clairvoyants of different types who are mysteriously in communion with God.

Mythological demi-gods are peculiar beings. They are neither God nor souls. Some of them are born of the union of human beings and the deity, some of the union of gods and goddesses.

What they originally are it is difficult to define. Their existence is shrouded in mystery. Greek, Roman, Hindu and other mythologies abound with them and their exploits. God Shiva, goddess Parvati, Minerva, Jupiter and Mars are all demi-gods who are said to have once made this earth a scene of their activities, but now for reasons not intelligible, are no longer heard of. Where they are, what they are doing, why they do not come to this world is quite unknown. Unbelievers may surmise that they were mere men with nothing super-human with them and it is only the long past that has endowed them with divinity and a halo.

Vedic literature (not Hindu mythology) gives us some clue. There the word *deva* (देव) which is a present synonym of 'God', meant a shining or an illuminating object. Thus they called *agni* or fire, a *deva*—but not a god. The word *deva* was also applicable to God the Creator, as He is the most effulgent. But this did not mean that every *deva* is god. In course of time, it seems, the word *deva* lost its original significance and when once the Sun, the Moon, the Wind and the like were supposed to be gods, legends and stories were woven round them and a host of gods or demi-gods sprang up. But they appear to be obsolete

now. For instance god Ganesha is the son of Shiva and Parvati. But what progeny has this god Ganesh, nobody bothers about.

Incarnations of God are something similar, but the affinity is mysterious. The Hindus thought that God's love required Him to come into human form, be born of human parents, and remove the then existing troubles of mankind with His human deeds. For instance Rama is born of King Dasharatha and Queen Kaushalya. He is God Incarnate. He comes to the world, that He might free the world of the oppressions of demon Ravana. Similar is the case of Krishna. Whether Rama and Krishna were in all respects identical with God the Creator, is a question which never troubles the believers. But there has been a question of percentage of divinity and the comparative merit of these incarnations. For instance Rama is supposed to be lesser than Krishna, the latter being a full incarnation or Purna Avatara (पूर्ण अवतार). What is the idea of this 'fullness' is again a mystery, because Krishna in his life as incarnation does not do the most important duty of God, I mean, creation. Most of these Avatars confine themselves to the destruction of demons, and it is this destruction in which lies their chief super-human-

ness. Other miracles, if any, are only subsidiary and comparatively insignificant.

Christ is also God Incarnate. But He is the son of God, born of Virgin Mary. What this sonship really means has always been a mystery. Christians are proud of this mystery. The more a thing is unintelligible, the more it claims our faith. Still there has been a long-existing dispute among Christian theologians regarding this mystery. "The evidence for the Virgin Birth is altogether inadequate, and it must be remembered that similar stories were told in regard to many other great personalities of the ancient world, Plato, Alexander and Augustus amongst them."¹

"If in the creed there are two clauses more than any others that ought to be expunged, assuredly, they are, 'was conceived by the Holy Ghost,' and 'Born of the Virgin Mary.' It is scarcely possible without irreverence, and happily it is not necessary, to state in plain language what the inevitable implications of these clauses are to those who accept them in their literalness, as so many people do."²

"It has been said that the assumption of a miraculous birth is necessary in order that the

¹ Science and Theology, p. 370.

² Ibid, p. 371.

taint of inherited sin might be broken. But the theory of the miraculous birth retains the human mother, while dispensing with the human father. It is, however, illogical to maintain that the taint descends in the male line only. To meet this difficulty, the Church of Rome invented the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. But if an Immaculate Conception was possible in the case of the Virgin, who admittedly had a human father as well as a human mother, why may we not make the same assumption about the conception of our Lord?"¹

As to how much or what percentage of Divinity Christ had, it is interesting to take the reader to a few discussions.

"The first important hypothesis put forward was by Origen (c. 185-253). It was that of the 'eternal generation' of the Son from the Father. By this Origen meant a timeless origination from the Father's essence, a process which, he insisted, was quite distinguishable from creation. He safeguarded the divine unity by means of his doctrine of subordination holding that the Father, in His absolute, underived existence, was the primal source of the

¹ Science and Theology, P. 371.

godhead, whilst the son had a *derived* existence. The Son was thus related to the Father as a derivative or subordinate Being. But although in this way the divine 'monarchia,' the sole government of God, was upheld, the feeling gradually arose that the doctrine imperilled the true divinity of Christ, who was relegated to a second position.

"Monarchianism was thus a doctrine which emphasised the unity of God and rejected a personal Trinity. But this rejection may take place in two very different forms. We may have an exaltation of the divine unity at the expense of Christ's true divinity (Ebionitic or Unitarian Monarchianism); or we may have the actual identification of Christ with the One Person of the godhead, who is thus viewed as assuming this particular 'mode' of manifestation. The latter form of Monarchianism is called "Modalistic".

"Two different hypotheses of Modalistic Monarchianism were put forward. The first was the Patripassion hypothesis. The Father Himself became incarnate in Jesus and suffered in and with Him. The defenders of this hypothesis, when pressed to explain how the Father could at the same time be Son, said that the divine element—the immanent spirit—in Jesus was the Father, and that the

flesh which He assumed constituted Him the Son. The second hypothesis was worked out by Sabellius (fl. 230), who substituted for a Trinity of Persons a Trinity of *modes* or *aspects* of the Divine Being; in this way he aimed at giving a rationale of the Trinitarian distinction in harmony with Monarchian principles. But the Monarchian movement culminated in the hypothesis of Paul of Samosata (Bishop of Antioch 260-270), who is said to represent the place of 'dynamical' Monarchianism. Paul held that Jesus, commencing as a man, was raised by progressive development to the dignity of Son of God, obtaining for His excellence divine rank. The Logos in god, he held, was simply what reason is in man. The union of the Logos with and the penetration of the divine power in Jesus did not differ except in degree from the union and penetration in any other man. In degree it did differ, and thus Jesus advanced progressively until he reached divine rank. The godhead of Jesus was thus a godhead of rank, not a godhead of essence, and the relation of the godhead to the humanity was a dynamical one.

"But the Church rejected the hypothesis that godhead is a thing that can begin in time, or that it can be conferred as a degree of honour on a

'creature' (a created being).

"These Monarchian controversies of the third century were but preludes to the more famous Arian controversy of the fourth. The fundamental question at issue was as to the manner in which the relation of Christ to the Father was to be conceived in order that, on the one hand, His true divine dignity might not be compromised, and on the other, the divine Monarchia might not be endangered. Hitherto the tendency had been to exalt the divine Monarchia at the expense of the distinct hypostasis of the son; subordinationist tendencies had also been strong.

"The Arian dispute originated in Alexandria in 318 when Arins, a presbyter, came into conflict with his Bishop on this question, i.e., the question of the relation of the Son to the Father. He maintained the doctrine of the divine unity, and at the same time the doctrine of the distinct personality and separate existence of the Son. Lest he should confess two Gods, he treated the little Son of God as a title of honour only. As Son, the Son was later than Father, and therefore not eternal, and therefore not God but a creature."¹

But Arianism was opposed and declared a heresy in the council, which met at Necaca in

¹ Science and Theology, pp. 371-374.

325. That the Son was of 'the same substance' with the Father was definitely adopted.

This was not all. The controversy about the percentage of divinity continued. Several hypotheses were advanced :—

(1) Apollinaris (Bishop of Laodicea, c. 390) assumed that, in the constitution of the Person of the Divine Son, the Logos replaces the soul of the ordinary human being. The Church rejected it.

(2) Nestorius (Patriarch of Constantinople c. 428-431) said that the Logos united Himself in the closest form of *moral fellowship* with the man Jesus, without the latter thereby losing His independent personality. This was also rejected.

(3) The Council of Chalcedon (c. 451) defined the doctrine of Christ's person as follows :— "One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, confessed in two 'natures', without confusion, without conversion, without division, without separation."

These provisos were all meant to reconcile the different irreconcilable hypotheses.

Let the reader ask any half-dozen theologian scholars of his acquaintance to give definitions—definitions which will convey to all intelligent minds the same perfectly clear and distinct idea of the

nature of Christ and I am sure he will be landed in a chaos. In fact, the question of God's incarnation is so chaotic that you can hardly effect a reconciliation between your faith and your reason.

It may perhaps be supposed that the prophet proper, is more innocent as he claims no divinity for himself. But that is not the case. In theological books of Islam the controversy about the divine nature of Mohammad has been equally intricate. He is no doubt a creature of God and His servant. It is heretic to call him a Son of God or God Himself. But his superiority over man is so great that it could not escape dispute and discussion. Ahmad (God) and Mohammad (the Prophet) have often been regarded as very near each other, this nearness in the zeal of the devotee, often being reduced to zero or something like zero. A common Moslem sings:

Allah ke palle men wahdat ke siwa keya hai,
Lena hai so le lainge ham apne Mohammad se.

الله کے پلے میں وحدت کے سوا کیا ہے
لینا ہے سو لے لینے ہم اپنے محمد سے

“What is there in the possession of God except oneness?”

“We shall take, whatever, we desire, from our

Mohammad".

This is no doubt the idolization of the Prophet. But the basis of the sentiment is the doctrine that the prophet is not only a teacher, but a redeemer (Arabic Shafia), a mediator between God and man, and man's salvation lies through him and him alone.

What a Moslem feels for Mohammad is also felt by the followers of other prophets. They also have a share in the devotion of the devotee as Mohammad has a share in the Kalma or prayer of the Moslems. If the teacher is only a teacher, his work is confined to only preaching. The disciple is thankful to him for his guidance but he does not include him in his formula of prayer. In this way the disciples of ten thousand teachers can all be alike and friendly. But the difference arises when these teachers claim a certain percentage of divinity. The hostilities of one religion and another are not based so much upon basic principles about the existence or nature of God or about the moral teachings. These things melt into insignificance before the personal questions about the prophets who, some times theoretically but mostly practically usurp for themselves all devotion which man owes to his creator. In

order to substantiate these claims fantastic theories are set up which instead of putting an end to bickerings give them an almost unending lease of life. Happily we find that the old *rishis* of Vedic times claimed to be neither incarnations nor prophets. The old Upanishads are full of religious discourses and in not one of them is even the remotest reference to the divine nature, redeemer-ship or mediatorship of any of the sages. They all appear in the roll of a teacher or a disciple, trying to solve the mystery of life together in one fraternity, never claiming super-humanness for themselves. It is very unfortunate that that simplicity should have been replaced by more ambitious and therefore more selfish substitutes and a seed of rank communalism and ceaseless bickerings sown.

Priests are humbler persons, but by no means less dangerous. Perhaps prophets or those great personages who were later on deified and set up as incarnations, never claimed for themselves those ambitious powers or titles which interested persons endowed them with. But it is priests that constantly fan the flame of fanaticism and communalism, fighting themselves and leading their adherents to fights. It is why priest-craft has become

a nicknamed word at present. The institution of priests originated perhaps in the need of a teacher or a guide in the performances of daily prayer or other religious duties. As such it was a useful function. But as these priests lived on the charity of the people, the institution deteriorated and narrow grooves were made. True religiosity disappeared and forms and ceremonials remained. Priests claimed to be vicarious and dangerous theories were set up to legalize one thousand and one crimes that are connected with priesthood. In order to make a true calculation of the harm done by the priest-craft one should go through the labyrinth of the history of different churches of the world. The horrors which are attributed to the Pope of Rome, the persecutions which were given effect to by Protestantism and other religious movements, divers cruelties perpetrated by Islam upon non-believers, several iniquities and atrocities practised in India and elsewhere in the name of religion were and are in one form or another the outcome of the cult of prophets, incarnation and priests. A good deal of the blot which has darkened the face of religion can be washed away if man dispenses with mediators and tries to hold direct communion with his Maker.

CHAPTER XIII

FAITH AND REASON

Two main constituents of our mental attitude are seeing and believing. Seeing must lead to believing, but believing is not always preceded by seeing. Man's powers of seeing are limited and therefore naturally he depends upon the seeing of others. Here it is that he is generally deceived and duped by those who are cleverer than himself. Ordinarily in all secular matters, one should see before one believes. But in the realm of religion, one feels confounded.

This has given rise to the question of faith and reason. Some hold that religion is all a matter of faith and that reasoning makes a man only irreligious and irreverential. Divine mystery, they say, is too sacred to be peeped at. In some religious circles 'naturist' is a nickname for those who always refer to natural laws in matters religious, and there is a general tendency to condemn *why-ing* and *where-for-ing*.

But such a mental attitude, though consoling

in the beginning, does not go a long way. Mere faith will not help us when there are contradictory views prevalent. It will also not satisfy us when certain actual facts are in open variance with our convictions. Besides, whenever a new religion springs up, an appeal is made to our head, or when an old religion tries to defend itself from the attacks of an upstart, we refer to reason. So it is wrong to suppose that reason has no place in religious affairs. The attitude of all religionists has been something like this : All religions in their infancy have been controversial. They began with hurling catapults of reason against the strong existing walls of orthodoxy. They fired unceasingly bullets of arguments in order to create doubt about prevalent convictions. There was raised a storm of polemics till the very foundations of the social fabric were shaken and the peace of society was disturbed. They raised such a noise that even the sleepiest among the followers of the old faith felt the jerk and woke up. This was done by early Christian missionaries when they tried to put down idolatory and convert heathens. This was done by Wycliff when he brought about the first Reformation. This was done by Luther and his followers when Popery was suppressed. And this is being

done by all Christian missionaries when they go to other countries and try to convey the message of the Messiah to them. This was done by Mohammad the Prophet of Islam when he tried to convert the Arab idolators or to raise Moslems against them. This was done by the originators of two and seventy schisms that found a way into Moslem world from time to time. This was done by Gautama Buddha, when he preached the new faith. This was done by Shankaracharya when he strove to establish the religion of the Vedas and turn out Buddhism and Jainism.

So it is not that reasoning has never found a place in religious matters. The difference is only this much. When a religion is well established and deep grooves are made, then faith comes to the forefront and reason is mostly ignored. Then we get accustomed to the hearing of old sermons and bowing our heads in submission to all that is said, without even an idea of questioning. Our case, then, is similar to that of a traveller going along a highway, absorbed in other thoughts and his legs almost automatically carrying him on. Religion then becomes a habit like many other habits of secular nature.

There is one more occasion for the predomi-

nance of faith. When old orthodoxy finds itself shaken, it has recourse to appeal to faith. New doctrines bring their fresh weapons of arguments and the adherents of older faiths finding their arguments rusty and useless take refuge in faith only. Thus there arises a struggle between faith and reason.

If we go deep, we find that this struggle is unwarranted. Faith and reason both are necessary for our decision. Unless we know a thing, how can we believe in it and unless we believe in it, how can it be the basis of our activities? Thus an effort to know and an effort to believe go hand in hand. Even when our belief is based not upon our own knowledge but upon the knowledge of others, our own knowledge too plays an important part. All testimonies can be ultimately traced to knowledge. I have a faith upon my servant because my previous knowledge of his actions vouchsafes his being an honest person; I trust a friend because his previous actions have convinced me that he will not deceive me. Even blind faiths have their origin in knowledge. They do not grow wild. They are cleverly sown by cheats and hypocrites and cunningly reared and nurtured. "Playing upon one's ignorance" is a familiar saying. What does

it mean? It does not mean that the blind believer was totally blind. No cent per cent blind man will believe in anything. Even cheats base their cheating upon something that is not cheating. All blind faiths are an alloy,—an admixture of what is knowledge and not-knowledge. They do originate in knowledge, but foreign matter creeps in through the indolence of the believer or his incapacity to carry on further observations.

In secular matters faith is always or in majority of cases preceded by knowledge. But in religious matters knowledge is often suppressed and faith commands an almost exclusive monopoly. But here too there is a line of reasoning. People say that man's power of reasoning is so weak and his observation power so meagre that he cannot see long enough. His reasoning stops short at a certain limit. And as religion deals with things beyond this world reasoning does not help him and he has to find shelter in faith.

To a certain extent it may be true. But there is a good deal of fraud too. We have a blind faith upon our preceptors or *gurus* because we find that our powers are limited, but what guarantee is there that those who claim our blind faith and unquestioned obedience have unlimited powers?

If man is weak by nature, no other man has a right to dupe him on the plea of his own superhuman insight. "All our religious beliefs necessarily contain a large admixture of myth, of illusion, and of illogical compromise, and it is unfortunate that the organised Churches have tended to discourage the efforts of those who would uproot the still existing superstitious notions of a bygone age. Our mental pictures of the spiritual world of which we can have no positive knowledge are undoubtedly full of absurdities."¹

How do these absurdities grow? There is no doubt that they are there. It is admitted not only by incredulous unbelievers but also by different sections of the faithful too, otherwise one creed could not have been condemned in favour of another. But these absurdities grow just as all weeds grow in a garden side by side with desirable plants. Let us take an example, a concrete one. Every astronomer knows that eclipses can be predicted. It is very easy—almost as easy as to predict on Monday that the day after will be Tuesday. Follow the laws of rotation and revolution and you will get the result. But when in the minds of masses you

¹ "Theology and Religion" by Westaway, p. 347.

have impressed that you can predict one thing correctly, you take an illogical and unwarranted step further and predict that a certain man will die on a certain date or he will lose a certain financial concern in a certain part of the year. The first prediction was genuine as it was based upon astronomical laws. The second prediction is a fraud as it neither follows from the first, nor it has any other laws to support itself. It is an alloy and leads to complicated kinds of cheating. Masses think that just as you can predict one thing, you can predict any other thing. They do not know that in one case you have natural laws to help you and in another case, no laws at all.

Sometimes it is claimed that a certain man is inspired and his superhuman visions cannot be subjected to ordinary tests of knowledge. They must be believed. You must have faith upon them. But such an attitude has some difficulties. First of all such visions may not be real visions, but mere mental aberrations, illusions or hallucinations. In many cases such things have happened. Even expert psychologists have failed to detect faint lines of demarcation between healthy visions and unhealthy illusions. Secondly if such visions vary from man to man, whom to believe and whom

not to believe? The difficulty is that so many contradictory things demand our allegiance that we cannot but fall back upon our reasoning faculty, however weak it may be. Weak reasoning cannot be superseded by no-reasoning. The observations of all scientists tally; their inferences may differ. It is why science commands our faith. Similarly, if all clairvoyants' clairvoyances had tallied, however different their vision from ours, they deserved our allegiance. But unfortunately it is not so. Religious visionaries awfully differ and poor humble creatures are at their wits' ends. They do not know who is who. They cannot have equal faith on all. They do not understand how to decide. The result is chaos, credulity, superstition and in the end, fraud and hypocrisy.

There is one more fallacy. The question is not whether a certain religious seer's religious visions are not correct. They may or they may not be so. The question is whether you should believe them when you do not see them. It is one thing that you follow him along his path and he makes you see the same visions for yourself. It is quite another to have a blind faith in him and worship him simply because he claims to be subject to queer visions. The first supplements reasoning

and encourages experiments. The second displaces reasoning and encourages superstition. To say that all religion is a matter of faith is to go against the nature of man and to lower him down to the grade of sheep. Those religious leaders who take pride in being shepherds of their sheep-followers may well remember that sheep is not the most developed species and if religions are no more than sheep-making processes, they lose much that is commendable in them. Religion ought to be the best harmoniser of all the faculties that man possesses. To crush reasoning is to degrade humanity, which should not be the function of religion.

CHAPTER XIV

SUPERSTITION

The word superstition comes from the Latin root *stare*, to stand, with prefix *super*, or over. It means the holding of untruths on the basis of some truth. All superstitions are based upon truth. This is the secret of their longevity. It is a famous saying that superstitions die hard. But this die-hardness of theirs is due either to their real or imaginary utility.

Superstitions are of two kinds. Some superstitions have a nucleus of a grain of truth enveloped with absurdities which have not sprung from that truth, but have somehow come to be associated with it. There is another kind which is the outcome of ingenious brains and has been fabricated by them in order to direct the mass mind to a particular aim or to keep the masses attached to a particular practice.

Superstitions vary from age to age and country to country. But they are always present in the human society in some form or another. Every

home is familiar with them. Even educated sections are not free. Superstitions are vaguely connected with religion. You cannot always account for them, but they are there for some reason or another, and meddle with your affairs every now and then. Even atheists, agnostics or sceptics who have shaken off all shackles of religion and given up God as a tissue of madness are found victim to them. It is easier to be irreligious to give up the idea of God or to throw overboard religious practices; but it is a tremendously difficult task to free oneself from the clutches of superstitions. Superstitions creep in unnoticed, and remain hidden in the crevices of human brain awaiting a favourable time to pounce upon their victim and crush him down. Their seeming innocence preserves them from being detected, their apparent insignificance saves them from being taken notice of by reformers. But they are a thousand times more harmful than they appear to be. They have done greater loss to mankind than bigger false creeds or unreasonable doctrines. They are just like invisible bacteria which are more fatal than lions and tigers, simply because man is ever ready to fight the latter and ignore the former. In big religious treatises which deal with immoral practices or religious evils,

you will seldom find any notice being taken of superstitions. Nobody bothers with them, they are too trifling to be taken notice of.

But think of the havoc which they have produced. First let us quote a few samples of superstition. Welton in his "Logical Bases of Education" has cited from Clodd a few examples of the superstitions of low classes of England. Not only does a Suffolk farmer keep the instrument, which has cut him, from rust so that the wound may not fester but also "as many a stable door and main-mast testify, the nailing of horse-shoes to keep off the pixies and conversely to bring luck to farmer and sailor, thrives to this day." Compare the fixing of nails in the peepal tree as a remedy against toothache very common in India. An army of soothsayers, charmers, ghost controllers and the like carries on its nefarious trade at the expense of the general health of the people. A villager in India will seldom find himself so safe in the hands of a good physician as in those of a charmer. In America and England too more refined forms of these have come into vogue with high-sounding names of spiritualists, hypnotisers, mesmerists and what not. They take away the attention of the public from scientific methods of prevention

and cure of diseases, hygienic dietary, personal cleanliness, etc., and encourage quackery, witchcraft and fatalism.

In other spheres of life also superstitions have their sway. Herbert Spencer has cited several experiences. For instance, once he was dining with a couple when a little salt fell down on the table from the spoon. The wife cast a terrified glance at the husband meaning that it was a harbinger of some calamity. On another occasion it was incidentally discovered that the diners were thirteen, an ominous number. A wave of misgivings passed through the company, till their fears were set at rest by the discovery that one of the ladies was in her family way and thus the actual number was fourteen and not thirteen. In India your errand must fail if anybody happens to sneeze at the time, or a woman with empty jar crosses your way, or a dog flaps his ears.

Orthodox people consult the soothsayers almost invariably when they launch upon a big enterprize. In ordinary cases it appears too trifling but history shows that big national crises have resulted from them. Julius Caesar's wife dreams a bad dream on the eve of his tragic death. Oracles of Delphi and other temples brought

about important political changes. Babar's triumph over Ranasanga was in no small degree due to the consultation by the latter of his astrologers. Even in our own day in matters of grave political importance, we find astrologers busy with their predictions, newspapers publishing them with bold headlines and educated persons being unduly influenced by them. In many homes cuttings from newspapers are kept safe for reference at important turning points of the events.

But there is another aspect of the question which is no less horribly tragic. Cases can be cited in which mothers have thrown their children into the Ganges, devotees have cut their own throats at the altar of gods and goddesses, women have secretly murdered babies in order to save their children from some disease or imaginary calamity and people have been led to one thousand and one crimes which could have been spared in more enlightened conditions of the society.

Duping of the people by mischievous cheats has been very common in India and elsewhere. Nobody knows what Philosophers' stone is, nor the Elixir of Life. But both these are responsible for enormous tricking. "In the Middle Ages there was an almost universal belief in the transmutation

of metals by means of the Philosophers' stone. To it, the greatest miracles were ascribed. Roger Bacon himself does not hesitate to say that it was able to transform a million times its weight of base metal into gold (*millies million et ultra*).” Even now in Indian villages and even towns priest-cheats slip away with silver and gold ornaments of credulous women-folk on the pretext of doubting the quantity, giving rise to interesting police cases.

“Although concoctions, vile and worthless, purporting to be the Elixir of Life were sold for centuries, the claim of alchemy that appealed most strongly to most people was the artificial making of gold. To the avaricious man and to the needy prince the claim was irresistible. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries an alchemist was to be found in nearly every court in Europe.”

“Naturally it always happened that the court alchemist inevitably failed to deliver the gold he had so rashly promised, and in those days royal vengeance was apt to be swift and merciless. A certain Marie Zeigler was roasted alive by Duke Julius of Brunswick in 1595; about the same time our own Queen Elizabeth more merciful than her father, merely committed Cornelius de Lannoy to perpetual imprisonment in the Tower. In 1709 the

then king of Prussia hanged the Italian Caetano, grimly ordering the gallows first to be gilded with Dutch metal. It is said that Frederick of Wurzburg maintained a special gallows which he employed solely for the purpose of hanging alchemists.”¹

“Witchcraft, as it was called, was the result of the belief in evil spirits, of superstition, of imposture and of ignorance from early mediaeval times right down to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, witchcraft occupies a prominent place in the history of Western civilization.”

“This tendency survives even now, but in those days the predisposition to believe in the miraculous was so great that out of a very small number of recognized facts of nature, a vast and complicated system of witchcraft was constructed, round which there accumulated an immense mass of wildly impossible circumstantial evidence.”²

Look at the cruelties connected with this witchcraft. Famous Joan of Arc was burnt alive. “The roles then played by the French, the Burgundians, the English and even the Church itself, were all thoroughly discreditable.”³

¹ “Obsessions and Convictions of the Human Intellect” by Westaway, pp. 21, 22, 23.

² Ibid, p. 51.

³ Ibid, p. 55.

"In Germany, France, Spain, Britain, Switzerland and Sweden, the persecution raged with a fearful intensity. Seven thousand victims were burned at Trenes alone; at Toulouse, the seat of the Inquisition, four hundred perished at a single execution. Remy, a French Judge, boasted that he had put to death eight hundred witches in sixteen years."¹

Even Martin Luther "would have no compassion on these witches" and "would burn them all". (*Colloquia de fascinationibus*). Bishop Jewel preaching before Queen Elizabeth, said, "witches and sorcerers, are marvellously increased within your Grace's realm. Your Grace's subjects pine away even unto the death; their flesh rotteth, their senses are bereft."

"King James I did not hesitate to ascribe his stormy passage from Denmark to the machinations of witches." And what followed? One Dr. Fian was suspected of having caused the storm. Efforts were made to wring from him a confession by torture. King James himself suggested a new device: Fian's "nails upon all his fingers were riven and pulled off by an instrument called a turkas,

¹ Westaway's "Obsessions and Convictions," p. 57.

and under everie nayle there was thrust in two needles over, even upto the heads." However, "so deeply had the devil entered into his heart that he utterly denied all, and he was burnt unconfessed."¹

I need not dilate further. So much is sufficient to prove to what length superstition can go. Efforts are being made in some quarters to uphold superstition by bringing in a labyrinth of so-called scientific arguments. Big scientists like Sir Oliver Lodge have also lent their support and superstitions reign supreme among high classes. But it is difficult to check their harms. Superstitions are a blot on the face of religion and the sooner this blot is washed away, the better.

¹ Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 203, 223.

CHAPTER XV

HERESY

Heresy means going against the established creed of a particular Church. Heretics have been differently treated in different ages, but some sort of condemnation has always been offered to them. There are two questions raised. First, some people hold that if heretics are allowed their own way, they will develop hellish tendencies, which in the long run will result in their spiritual ruin. Therefore for their own sake they should be checked. Secondly, heresies are contagious and they may bring about the destruction of the whole society. This is the basis of all persecutions.

There is no doubt that there is a grain of truth in these arguments, but only a grain, by no means, sufficient to justify the persecutions which have from time to time blackened the pages of the human history. First of all, all leaders of thought were heretics in the beginning. Socrates was poisoned to death as a heretic as he misled the young minds of Athens. Jesus Christ was a great

heretic and it was his heresies that brought about his crucifixion. Mohammad, the great prophet of Arabia had to flee to Madina as a great heretic whose life was not safe in orthodox Mecca. Martin Luther very narrowly escaped the stake only for his heresies. In India, great Gautama Buddha and great Mahavira were condemned as heretics. And in their turn the followers of the latter not only persecuted but even took the life of great Shankaracharya simply because in their eye he was a heretic. In our own times, Swami Dayanand, the great founder of the Arya Samaj was regarded as a heretic and a fatal attack was made on his life by mixing poison in his food.

This is the genesis of heresies. When old institutions become rotten and diseased, and instead of benefiting the society, they begin to undermine its structure, new men rise up and oppose the orthodoxy. They are called heretics by those who either cannot understand them or through their selfish weaknesses dare not abandon the beaten path. It is also possible that the dissenters may be in the wrong or the remedy which they suggest for the evils of the society may prove too one-sided or temporary. But the question is what treatment should be meted out to them by the majority.

"It is sometimes gravely asserted that if a number of men disagree about the formulation of a doctrine, all being equally able, equally sincere, and equally versed in the available facts, then the minority must not only be guilty of intellectual 'error', but their pertinacity in holding such contrary views must be a mark of moral defect. Such a contention is obviously absurd. Even if the minority were really guilty of unsound reasoning—and who in the circumstances could decide if such be the case—that is no reason why their morality or their religious views should be impugned. All the members of any particular Church are necessarily heretics in the estimation of any other Church, and are, therefore, more likely than not, considered to be deserving of eternal damnation."¹

Difference of opinion is natural. All great men have differed on certain points. To respect one's own opinion is everybody's right. But it is reprehensible vanity that says that others have no right to hold their views. Live and let live is the safest motto. If you do not tolerate others' view, they will also not tolerate your views. What shall be the result? Both will appeal to brute

¹ Science and Theology, p. 383.

force and might will decide right. Do you think that such a course will ever be conducive to the betterment of human society ? At least there is one decided loss. New ideas die before they are born and there is a blockade of intellectual progress. Reason abdicates in favour of ignorance or hypocrisy and evils begin to multiply.

No doubt there are cases when one is compelled to oppose the views of one's opponent. Such an opposition is natural and necessary. But what form should it take and upto what limits should it be carried ? The Christians burnt the heretics alive because they thought or appeared to think that the longer a heretic lives, the more he will sin against God and that it was better to be roasted in earthly fire than to burn in the eternal fire of heaven. The same line of argument has been followed by other religious persecutors also. But it is a grave mistake. No man can honestly claim to have an exclusive possession of the key of heaven. Even Christ did not condemn to everlasting punishment the publicans and sinners for their heterodoxy. My own view is that no one should be allowed to take the life of a fellowman and even a fellow creature on the plea of religion whatever his views, unless the latter transgresses his right

and encroaches upon the right of others. If a man preaches bloodshed, animal sacrifices or human sacrifices, the society has every right to check him in all possible ways and even cut his life short if no other way is possible. But such cases ought to be very rare and very cautiously taken up. Ordinarily, our minds should have a free scope to think and we should have freedom to pursue whatever line of action appeals to us the most. If you study minutely the history of religious persecutions, you will very seldom find honesty of purpose. Bigots are only ten per cent religious in the true sense of the term. They give up essentials of religion, such as truth, honesty, devotion to God, and emphasize only outer forms. They howl at the top of their voices while their hearts are hollow. They wish to save others from the fire of hell by kindling the fire of this world, while their own inner selves are burning in the fire of selfishness, hypocrisy and rage. Think of a crowd of Moslem devotees leaving their mosques and pouncing upon the music players on the road side. Is it devotion? Think of a Hindu trying to enforce Suttee system, upon innocent widows. He hardly ever questions how far his own life is nobler or more religious.



CHAPTER XVI

PRAYER

"Atonement," says a Christian missionary, "means at-one-ment." The atonement of Jesus Christ for the sins of mankind may or may not be at-one-ment. But at-one-ment is the key-stone of all religiosity. The most typical word for prayer or worship in Sanskrit language is *sandhya* which means coming together or at-one-ment.

(*Sam*=together and *dhā*=to put).

The importance of prayer in religion can best be judged by the fact that although prayer is only one of the many functions of religion, in common parlance, both religion and prayer are regarded as conguent in all respects. A man who fulfils all other conditions, but does not pray is called irreligious and a man who only prays and does nothing else is supposed to be the most religious. It is in this sense that mosques, temples and churches are looked upon as God's Houses and their sanctity becomes the paramount duty of the society and the state.

'There is no doubt that religion in its true sense covers the whole life of man, omitting nothing that is life and adding nothing that is not life and in this sense every particle of the world is the Abode of God and much more the body in which the inner man resides. But as prayer is meant to colour the whole life of man, past, present and future, it has become the most important of religious duties.

If you want to know what prayer is, you will find several varieties of it in the religious market. A shopkeeper hot-busy with his customers and yet telling the beads of his rosary, this is one variety. A rich money-lender who cannot spare a moment from his worldly engagements hires a priest to recite 'Rama Rama', 'Gayatri' or any other form of God's names and at night goes to bed with a consolation that he has not been quite negligent of life after death. This is another variety. Another rich man gets a voluminous book printed at his cost which contains nothing but the sacred syllable 'Rama Rama' and thinks that as many times the syllable has been printed in all the copies of the book, so many times it has been taken as recited by him. This is the third variety. The Prayer-wheel of the Tibetans which is a big rotary machine to bring

out the name of the deity with a great velocity is the fourth form. In these days of scientific inventions it is not difficult to devise a contrivance which could turn out the greatest number of copies of God's name in the least time, at the least cost and with the least attention. Instead of devoting all twenty-four hours to religious prayers, you can just direct your agent to spend a minute yearly and organise a stupendous system whereby it be possible to get God's name repeated millions of times and to secure for you all the benefits of religious life. The sale of indulgences organised by the Popes of Rome in the time of Martin Luther was a similar type.

But the question is: "Is this all at-one-ment? Is this all prayer?" It is these types of prayers that have set thinking minds against religion itself. Gautama Buddha was disgusted with the prayers which were in vogue in his times. So was Christ. So was John Wycliff, the morning star of Christian Reformation. So was Luther. And so was Swami Dayanand in his own times. The same disgust is found in the minds of atheists too. They say that religious prayers are not a jot better than the flattery and buffoonery prevalent in the courts of despots. They do not ennoble man's life. They degrade him. They enslave him. They kill all

spirituality that nature has put in him. All real prayer ought to be at-one-ment or rising of the soul to God, finding itself near God (उपासना upasana. *Up*=near, *Asana*=sitting). You can call it realization of God. It is a mental attitude, not a form. Yajur Veda says:—

“The wise and religious sages apply their mind and intellect to the great and wise God, who and who alone supports and knows all. This (application of mind and intellect) is the best worship of the Great Creator.”¹

Swami Dayanand in his Satyarthi-Prakash writes that “whoever says that sugar is sweet does neither obtain the sugar nor its taste,”² similarly mere recitation of prayers is useless.

It is a very unfortunate thing that many things which were not prayer in the beginning have now come to be regarded as ‘prayer proper.’ I shall give here two examples. The Azan in a Moslem mosque, as the Arabic word testifies, is only a call to prayer and not prayer itself. Similarly, the

¹ युञ्जते मन उत युञ्जते धियों विश्रा विप्रस्य वृहतो विपश्चितः ।
वि होत्रा दधे वयुनाविदेकङ्गमही देवस्य सवितुः परिष्टुतिः ॥
(यजुवद् ५।१४)

² The Satyarthi-Prakash, Chapter VII.

PRAYER

tolling of bells in a Hindu temple or a Christian Church means no more than information to the people that the time for prayer has come and that they should collect there. But if you closely watch the worshippers, you will find that rites and ceremonies occupy the whole attention of the devotees and people cling to the husk, throwing the inner kernel to dogs. I have often watched the pilgrims hurrying to have a dip in the Ganges, singing religious songs or reciting sacred syllables. I have tried to find what their mental attitude is. I have seen Kirtan Mandlis or singing parties arranged for religious purposes. In ninety-nine per cent cases, I failed to detect any serious religiosity.

I do not mean to say that recitations have no value. Language has its place in the economy of nature and so have recitations in religion. But their utility is limited. As soon as they usurp the place of other factors, they lose their value and become pernicious. Language is a medium of thought and is useful only so far as it conveys thought. It is not impossible to use language without thought. We do it every day. A child utters words and sentences which he does not understand at all. Even adults, and sometimes

well-educated adults use words which they do not at all mean. James in his psychology has quoted paragraphs from standard magazines which though beautifully worded convey no sense whatsoever. Herein lies the danger of prayers and recitations. There are many formulas which are altogether meaningless. Some religious preceptors have devised queer syllables for their disciples. They hold that no religion is worth the name unless it is mystified. Therefore, in order to overawc the devotees they make prayers more and more mystic. I think that it is a sheer misuse of prayers as it does not and cannot ennoble the inner life of man.

The real aim of prayers is that the worshipper should internally realize that he is inseparably connected with a cosmic power and that his own life is a part and parcel of a much bigger life—the life of the universe. He has to harmonise his life with that Great Life. He has to feel the unity. All prayers of right type are meant to impress upon the worshipper this reality. Prayers do begin with lip motions, but if they end there, they become harmful. Patanjali, the father of Indian Yoga, says “Recite and meditate.”¹

¹ तज्जपस्तदर्थं भावनम् । १२८



The Arya Samaj stands for a perfect type of rationalism, which consists in harmonising science, philosophy, sociology, emotions, and in fact, all that concerns life. It also stands for toleration, because it is reprehensible vanity that says that others have no right to hold their views. But it welcomes such heretics who rise up and oppose those orthodox institutions which have become rotten and diseased and instead of benefiting the society have begun to undermine its structure. The Arya Samaj stands for truth, honesty and devotion to God.
